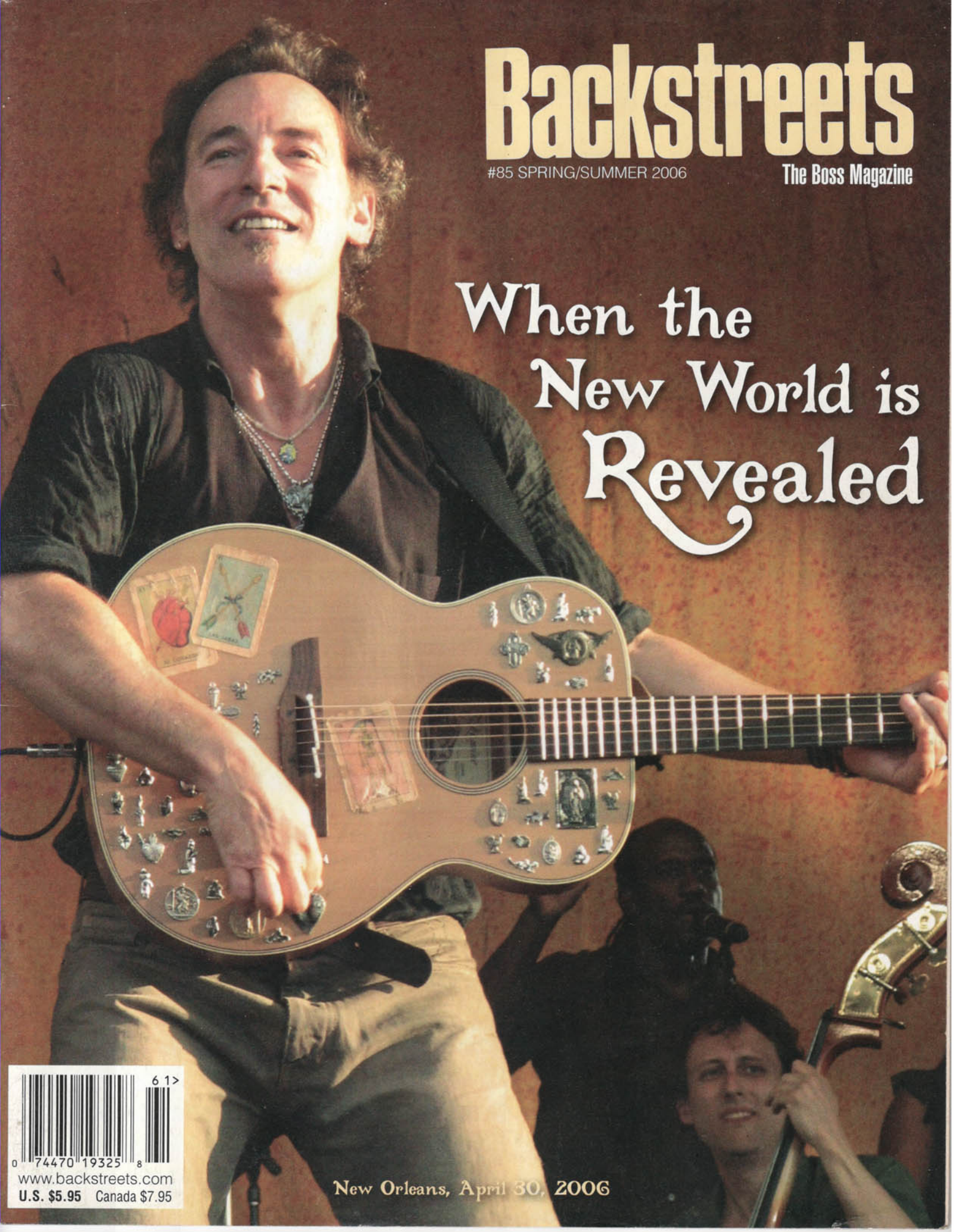
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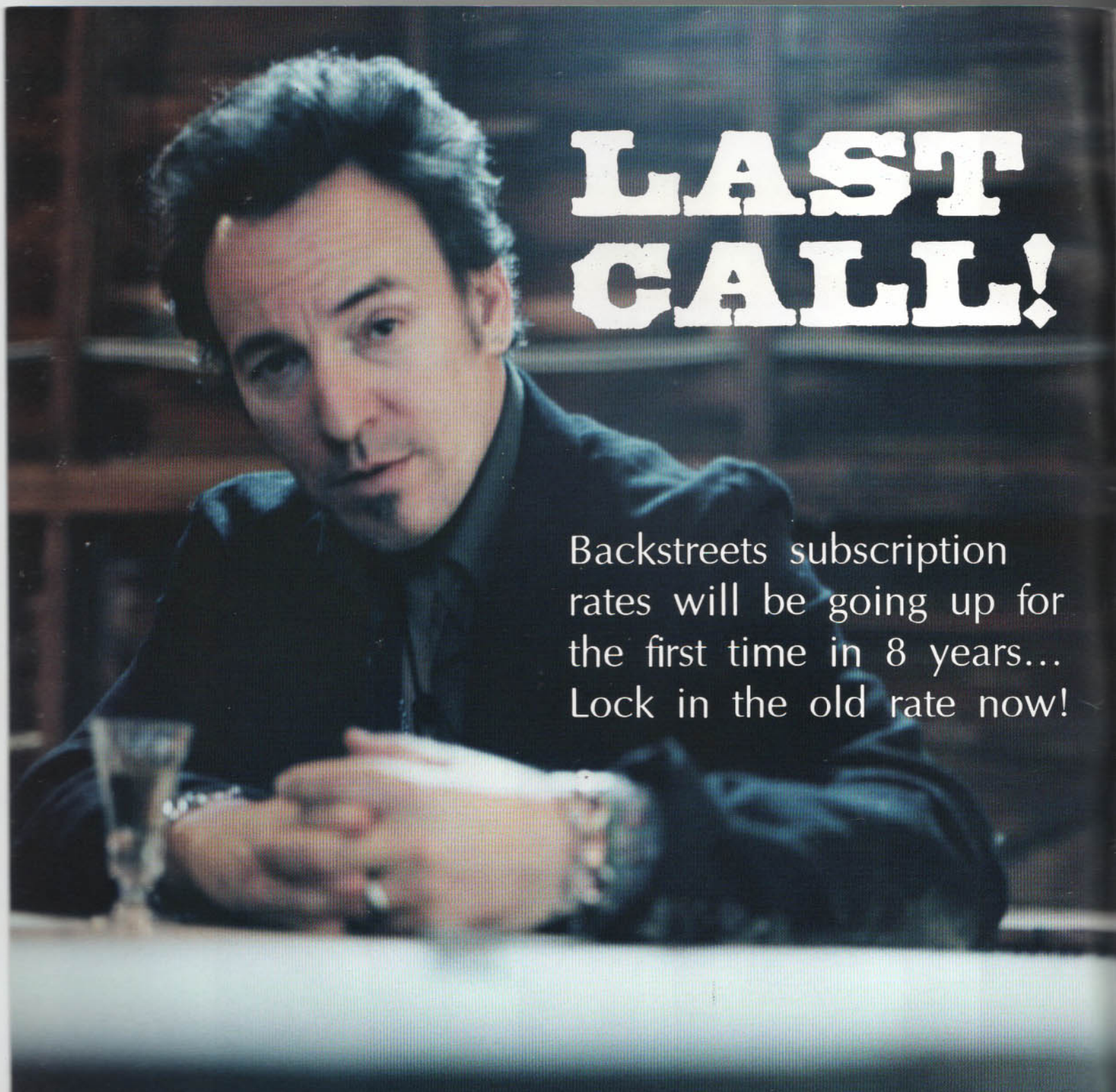

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Ruth Barohn Photo

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April 30, 2006 / New Orleans, LA
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LETTERS

A SOLDIER'S THINGS

Dear Editor:

I am currently in Iraq, serving as a firefighter for the U.S. Air Force. The days are very long and can be very stressful. As you already probably know, troops cling to their music like they cling to their weapons out here. Ever since The Doors defined the Vietnam era, every troop seems to have that one artist that takes them back home, sitting with their girl, or even just enjoying an afternoon with buddies. Granted, these moments are born in the imagination and they never seem to last quite that long, but man, they are the best therapy when they do hit.

Obviously, my guy is Bruce. It is kind of ironic that a guy who is shunned sometimes for his practicing of "free speech" is the one who has soothed my war-weary soul so many times. His music, as you all know, can cut like a knife. I have enjoyed all his stuff out here, but there is just something about *Devils & Dust* that hits home with me. My girl and I saw him live in Milwaukee a few months before I deployed, and it was his solo acoustic show. It was absolutely amazing.

It is mind-blowing that the sounds in this environment can be erased by such powerful lyrics. Bruce, if by some chance you happen to read this correspondence, please know that the troops are for you, and the music you create has made this miserable place a lot easier for both them and myself to deal with.

In closing, I am honored to serve my country whenever duty calls, but I will never forget the lasting impression that album has had on me. Nevertheless, upon my return home you can guarantee that as I sip that first beer I will be cranking "Mary's Place" from *The Rising*, and *Devils & Dust* will be a secret reminder to me of how music can truly heal one man's soul.

SSgt David MacCudden
Firefighter/EMT
Kirkuk Air Base Fire Dept.
Iraq

NEW COAT OF PAINT

Dear Editor:

I'm very pleased to read the positive reports from the new tour on your website. I especially liked your own comments from the DC-area and Chicago shows. After seeing so much negativity from the newsgroups from so-called fans, it's pleasant to read about how great this tour really is. The problem with some die-hard fans is all they want is the same old, same old: the E Street Band cranking out "Thunder Road," "Badlands," "Born to Run," and "Rosalita" every night. Don't get me wrong, I love the E Street Band and look forward to seeing them again someday. However, I got to see so many great shows on the Reunion and *Rising* tours that I can't complain. The greatness of Bruce lies in his diversity, from all the amazing reworking of his catalog during the *Devils & Dust* shows to the tour de force that is the Seeger Sessions Tour.

It isn't a matter of "drinking the Kool-Aid," as some fans suggest; it's more a matter of having an open mind and the willingness to hear something fresh and new, even when "new" can mean hundreds of years old. This is a great affair of uplifting music and tunes that has everyone singing along. It's strange to think that the best songs at a Bruce show are ones he didn't write, but Bruce has a history of doing great cover songs in concert, from "I Want You" and "Mountain of Love" in '75, to all the great Buddy Holly songs in '78 and CCR songs in '81. The highlights of the '93 tour for me were the covers of "Satan's Jewel Crown" and "Many Rivers to Cross." Now in '06 we can add "How Can a Poor Man" and "Bring 'Em Home," two more songs that I can't get enough of. They should get radio airplay every day, if for no other reason than to open the eyes of those wearing blinders to the current administration. But that's a whole other can of worms.

Keep the tour reports coming, and keep spreading the good news. Those passing on the show, they're really missing out. They'll get their time to pump their fists to "Badlands" later on. For now I'll pay me my money down and have a great time to boot.

Tom Friedrich
Austin, TX

BLOOD MONEY

Dear Editor:

I've just read, with great interest, the comments on your website report from Springsteen's May 28 show, especially your opinions on concerts not selling out. Whilst it appears to be true that fans who choose not to attend the Seeger shows are missing a great night out, you fail to consider the reasons that many are deciding to stay at home.

Firstly, for some, there is the fear of the unknown. Springsteen is playing predominantly another writer's songs, with an unknown band. Are people interested in Seeger's songs? How will this band sound live? In contrast, there is the familiarity and general "safeness" of an E Street Band concert, with an almost certain guarantee of reasonable quality.

Secondly, and probably most importantly, is the cost. I chose not to attend any of the recent U.K. shows for this reason, combined with the "unknown" factor. From what I've read, the U.S. shows cost around $100 per ticket. In my opinion, this is asking fans to make a substantial investment in something that, when we temporarily remove our rose-tinted spectacles, boils down to being a self-indulgent vanity project for Springsteen.

I know that it is not PC in Springsteen communities to express these kind of sentiments but I thought that I would offer a contrasting realist view.

I'm certain Springsteen could have absorbed more of the show's cost, or just reduced his profit margins, to offer higher incentives to fans and the curious to attend the concerts. Blind loyalty, as implied by Springsteen and yourself, is an unrealistic ask in times when people have to carefully monitor their budgets.

David Robb
Edinburgh, Scotland

VIRGINIA AVENUE

Dear Editor:

I read Backstreets.com every day and greatly appreciate your vision and passion for serving Springsteen Nation. I just read your May 28 posting, including your thoughts on why some shows are not selling out. Here are two more possible reasons.

Some people are tired of the ticket prices. If you think about it, it is a bit ironic that people are asked to pay more than 70 bucks to watch a man sing about people who could never afford to see his show. Easy now, Springsteen Nation, I know the Boss is second-to-none in his work on behalf of the disenfranchised, but he also has plenty of money and maybe does not have to charge as much as he does.

Another reason: Some people are tired of the anti-Bush rhetoric. A lot of Virginians have family and friends serving proudly in the military. These public servants weren't drafted, they volunteered, and guess what? A lot of them don't *want* to come home;

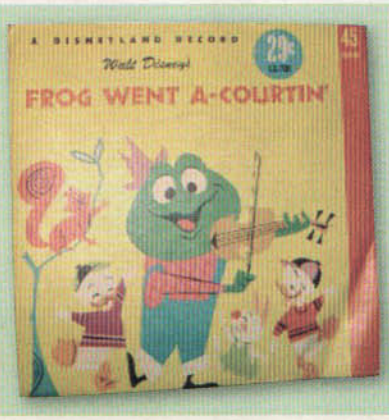
A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES

Dear Editor:

My three-year-old and I were digging through my old 45s today, and I came across this. Pretty amazing. It's a Disneyland production, dated 1961, and the series is called "Folksy Songs for Little Folks." It's performed by Frances Archer and Beverly Gile.

I always kid my husband that I was way ahead of the Bruce curve, falling in love with *Born to Run* in '76 when I was just eleven years old. But this one takes the cake. I've had "Frog Went A-Courtin'" since I was in diapers!

Theresa Deckebach
via e-mail



they want to finish what they started. Based on Springsteen's full breadth of work, I would always assume his position is, "I support the troops but not the war." The reality, though, is that many people—especially many military families—believe we can best support the troops by supporting the war and the Commander-in-Chief. There are a lot of these people, and many are not right-wingers, and many are not Republicans either, and they just might be part of the crowd staying home from Springsteen concerts.

Stephen Horan
Richmond, VA

STRAIGHT TO THE TOP

Dear Editor:

For the first time as a Bruce fan, I actually had to consider whether to buy tickets to the latest tour. I like the *Seeger Sessions* album, but never thought it would rank as a favorite in my Springsteen library (the jury is still out on that one). As for the tour, I just was not sure how this music would translate in a live setting. Would it be a Bruce show like I have come to expect, or would it be a letdown?

But 20-plus years of listening to Bruce and seeing him in concert won out, and I got tickets to the Concord show. I don't know that I have ever spent my money more wisely. Music that, while lively and fun, did not burst out and win me entirely over on CD, truly came alive in concert. The added emphasis on the horn section—and wow, what a horn section! —helped, but what really came through live was how much fun these guys were having. "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" blew me away like no new song has since the acoustic version of "Born to Run" in '88.

Everything from the *Seeger Sessions* record was fantastic, but what really made the show for me were the complete reworkings of Bruce's originals. "Johnny 99," "Atlantic City," and "Ramrod" were all amazing, and "Open All Night" pretty much took my head clean off. To take what is, to me, almost a throwaway song from *Nebraska* and turn it into a full blown big-band sing-along romp... it was incredible, the kind of performance that continues to earn Bruce his well-deserved reputation as the greatest live performer of all time.

The show was transcendent and elevated the *Seeger Sessions* record, to me, from a minor addition to the Springsteen canon, to a major work of re-interpretation and artistry from a true artist.

Kevin Barnett
Foster City, CA

I WISH I WAS IN NEW ORLEANS

Dear Editor:

As you wrote of New Orleans on your website: "A night to be proud you're a fan. Yes, yes, yes."

There is a great feeling that washes over you when you're in the right place, with the right group of people, at exactly the right moment. Bruce and the Seeger Sessions Band's show on April 30 at Jazz Fest was one of those times. I can't shake, and don't honestly want to shake, the feeling I've carried home with me. Proud to be a fan, indeed.

Bob Yarbrough
Charlottesville, VA

FOREIGN AFFAIR

Dear Editor:

I love your Tom Waits mention in the most recent rehearsal show review. Both Bruce's look on the *Seeger Sessions* DVD and some of the percussion on the songs had me thinking of ol' Tomcat quite a bit. Another name was Shane MacGowan. From the fact that Bruce does "Jesse James," which the Pogues covered on *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash* (though Spider Stacy took care of lead vocals on that track), to Bruce's talk about "recontextualizing" these songs. What Shane and the Pogues did was just what Bruce is doing: they took Irish folks songs which Shane knew were *so* great, added a drum and bass and a whole bunch of attitude, and breathed—or should I say "kicked"—new life into them. How many Pogues fans ran out to buy Dubliners and Clancy Brothers music?

When you mentioned "Long Black Veil," my mind went to the Chieftans album of the same name, where Mick Jagger takes it on. That whole album has the same feel of the *Seeger Sessions*—just Irish folk vs. American folk.

Continued on page 90

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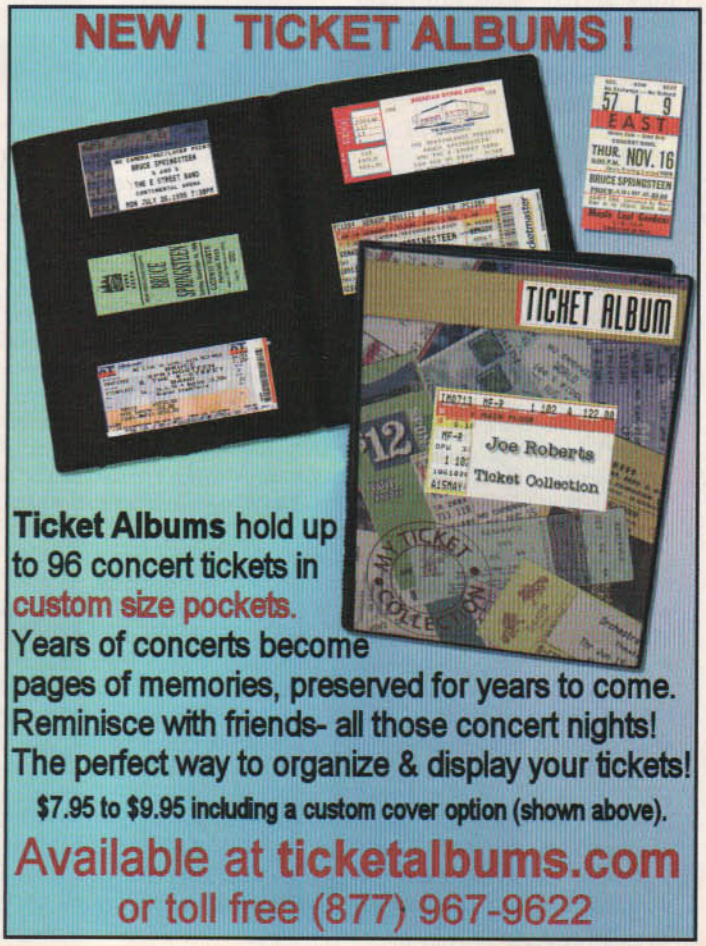
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Stolen moments and living proof

The New World

By Christopher Phillips

So, I'm a cool rockin' daddy. Well, "cool" and "rockin'" may be up for debate, but I'm most definitely a daddy. There are all sorts of ways to tell: the constant yawning, the fact that my morning alarm hasn't been set since February, the way I say everything twice, and the silly voice I find myself saying it in. *(Yes, that's right! The silly voice I find myself saying it in! Goochie-goo!)* Not to mention all the new Springsteen memorabilia around the house: bibs ("Born to Drool," "Boss Time!"), onesies ("Just Born in the U.S.A."), even a custom painted "Born in the U.S.A." rocking horse. (Thanks again, good folks on BTX.)

And then there's little Lucy Rose herself—who will either grow up a huge Springsteen fan, or run screaming at the thought. I'm prepared for the latter, and I'm sure we'll try to dial it all down once she's truly aware of her surroundings.

It's only been five months since she was born, and I can hardly remember what life was like without her. Well, I clearly remember being more productive... and I remember going to see movies, just barely... but as for a time when her goofy little face wasn't grinning up at me and making raspberries, when I didn't know her strong grip on my index finger or the happy squealing sounds she makes when she wakes up, that's all pretty fuzzy.

Amidst all the turns-out-to-be-true talk we heard as we waited for Lucy to be born—like "You won't believe how much you love her," "Your life is about to change forever," and "Sleep now!"—another piece of wisdom was, "There are some songs you'll never hear the same way again." And besides "Long Time Comin'," I was pretty sure I knew exactly which song they meant.

So, not long after Lucy was born, I got in my truck with my copy of *Lucky Town*. I thought I'd create a moment for myself. Turned the fader from its full-frontal position (another tip-off that I'm a father, trying to protect those young ears in the back)

to get all the speakers involved. Cued up "Living Proof," hit the road, and...

Nothing. Well, not *nothing*, exactly: good song. *Great* song. But it sounded much the same as it always had—back when I first heard it and pictured Springsteen holding his first child; back when I cranked it in the car on the way to my first interview at *Backstreets* HQ, psyching myself up; and all the other times I've listened to it since. There behind the wheel, hearing the song for the first time since Lucy came into the world, the sky didn't open up, no great light shone down. I guess I'd already spent so much time with that song, picturing a possible future, that it now just evoked all those years *imagining* having a kid rather than actually having one. I backed it up and played it again, and realized you just can't force those moments.

But moments come all the same, and they like to take you by surprise. A few weeks later, I was up in Asbury Park for the Seeger Sessions rehearsal shows. It was my first time away from the gals for the night, and it was good to be out—especially knowing that Laura had things well in hand back home, of course—but I couldn't stop thinking about them throughout the show, either. And then, during "When the Saints Go Marching In," came a line out of nowhere that did what I had been expecting "Living Proof" to do:

"I'm waiting for that morning / When the new world is revealed."

There came the goosebumps, the moment of recognition. I thought of waiting for our girl to arrive, and of watching her each day since as she seems to take in more of the world around her, as she continues to grow. My wife and I, too, are suddenly in an undiscovered country—old as the hills, but new and strange to us—and we're exploring it slowly every day. And then there are all our hopes and fears about what waits for Lucy, the kind of world she'll grow up in, the world she'll make for herself, and all the days ahead, morning by morning, as all is revealed. And Lord, how I want to be in that number.

You might as well have told me I'd be dumbstruck during "Jimmy Crack Corn," but there it was, in a flash. And as thoughts of my daughter and the new worlds she'd ushered in swirled through my head, I was simultaneously struck by how well that verse described the concert I'd been witnessing, that I'd left my baby to come see. Shaking the rafters, wearing out my vocal cords, here was the new-direction-with-different-musicians many of us had hoped Springsteen would find for more than 15 years, since the time he once dissolved the E Street Band to go looking for it.

"The New World"—capitalize it, and it nicely suggests not only the Seeger Sessions Band's musical leap, but also its distinct Americanness. It's a mongrel mix of jazz, gospel, folk and more—a melting pot of American music reinvented. After the "Americana" tag has been applied to just about any act with a Gram Parsons record in their collection, here's music expansive enough to sound worthy of the term.

All wrapped up in the night's entertainment are reminders of our disastrous bungling on the Gulf Coast, our protracted War on Terror, our continued wrestling with civil liberties. There in Asbury Park, thinking of the approaching European tour and our current place in the world, this felt like a national export to be particularly proud of. The show embodies some of the best of this country's traditional traits: it sounds defiant, raw, idealistic.

Bruce combines roll-up-the-rug nostalgia with a contemporary urgency, seemingly compressing hundreds of years of history of the New World, musically and topically, into something that feels brand new and timeless all at once. The *Tom Joad* tour suggested that our concept of individuality is illusory, that maybe we're all part of one big soul. This show, with the crowd hollering along to old protest songs, chanteys and laments that are as vital as ever, suggests that our notions of progress and modernity may be just as meaningless.

And yet: rather than a trip back to the past, it felt like we were being carried forward by this music. We got a glimpse of the country we carry in our hearts, as Bruce has said before, and of "a righteous train rollin' down this track," as he sings now—the promise of redemption.

When the new world is revealed. Standing there, struck by this perfect, simple phrase that suggests how my life is moving forward into parts unknown, and how Springsteen's creative life keeps moving forward, and feeling not just the usual Springsteenian hope but, for a moment, the *inevitability* of a better day, all at once, it felt like... well, it felt like living proof. How about that?

A folk explosion for the oughts

The Seeger Sessions Band Sings Out

By Andrew E. Massimino

TONY NELSON PHOTO

When the *Devils & Dust* tour wrapped up towards the end of 2005, it was widely considered to have been a wonderful chapter in the long touring history of our man Bruce Springsteen. The solo shows were thrilling, highlighted by the amazing willingness on Springsteen's part to play songs not heard in decades. The setlists were long and varied, and each night audiences left with their own "Wow!" moment. Still, it wasn't long after that tour ended (and granted, *before* it ended, for some) that thoughts turned to E Street, with hope building that the band would be ready to roll in early 2006.

In February, rumors circulated of an E Street album already finished, and fans were holding off on making summer plans to visit Aunt Martha until they could find out about shows with Uncles Clarence and Steve. So when Springsteen announced that he indeed did have an album ready for an April release—only without the band, and consisting of folk songs popularized by Pete Seeger—well... let's just say that the response was mixed at best. Many envisioned another solo tour with Bruce singing "If I Had a Hammer" in dark theatres across the land. Anything but that!

And it has been.

This particular detour from rock 'n' roll has taken Springsteen right into the heart of traditional American music. With the *Seeger Sessions* album, band, and tour he's found a way to make "folk music" vital, current, and shitloads of fun. This ain't your older brother's *Tom Joad*-kind of folk music, all quiet and stark. Serving up a tasty gumbo of folk, Cajun, jazz, blues and gospel, the shows are delivering generous portions of raucous, dance-inducing sing-a-longs. Or shout-a-longs, as is often the case.

The Seeger Sessions touring band is the largest Springsteen has ever employed—only Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom comes close! And while there's nobody playing Monopoly on stage this time, they're playing just about everything else. For the first time since 1988's Tunnel of Love Express, Bruce Springsteen has a horn section on tour, and it is glorious. Richie "La Bamba" Rosenberg (trombone), Mark Pender (trumpet), Eddie Manion (sax), and Art Baron (tuba) form the cacophonous core most nights, with Clark Gayton (trombone) and Curt Ramm (trumpet) sometimes subbing in—for Rosenberg and Pender, respectively—and sometimes joining in on those nights when, you know, you just *need* six horns.

After deciding to take this show on the road, Springsteen expanded the Seeger Sessions Band's lineup from the album's 13 players to a stage-filling 17. The only player who did not make the leap from album to stage was Mark Clifford on banjo, and Greg Liszt is now starring in that role. For most dates the Seeger Sessions Band—in addition to the horns—was fielding the following lineup: Sam Bardfeld (violin), Frank Bruno (guitar), Jeremy Chatzky (upright bass), Larry Eagle (drums), Charles Giordano (accordion, keyboards), Curtis King (vocals), Greg Liszt (banjo), Lisa Lowell (vocals), Cindy Mizelle (vocals), Marty Rifkin (pedal steel guitar), Patti Scialfa (vocals), Marc Anthony Thompson (guitar and vocals) and Soozie Tyrell (violin).

Mr. Thompson has taken time away from his solo career performing as the soulfully introspective Chocolate Genius to be Bruce's main counterpart in the band. His enthusiasm is infectious, and his turns at mic-sharing with Bruce are captivating.

Springsteen, of course, handles the lead vocal, guitar and harmonica, but his biggest job might be bandleader. He regularly calls out key changes and solos, keeping the band on its toes in anticipation. They're not thundering along like the E Street Band, but they explode off the stage, reaching the back rows of amphitheaters with ease. They're popping and rocking, swinging and bringing it every night. If the *Devils & Dust* tour was the full realization of the legendary Christic shows, then this tour is the embodiment of an idea hatched around that same time: Springsteen has finally found the perfect vehicle for playing with musicians outside E Street.

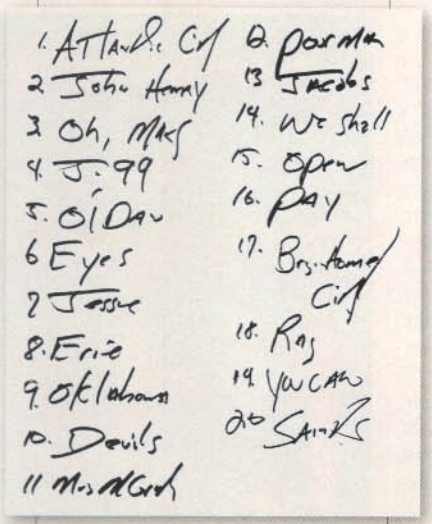
In mid-March, Springsteen gathered his motley crew in Asbury Park for closed-door rehearsals. A month later the doors were opened and audiences were treated to four benefit rehearsal shows at Convention Hall (see page 44 for coverage and details.) A European tour would begin in early May (ten dates in nine countries over 17 days) but it was the announcement of one U.S. show sched-

uled in between that provided a unique buzz in the music world. Bruce Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band would make their "official" debut on April 30 in New Orleans as part of that beleaguered city's Jazz & Heritage Festival.

It seems fairly obvious now, but so much of the Seeger Sessions project, especially the timing of it, was influenced and inspired by the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina. If *The Rising* was Springsteen's response to 9/11, *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* is his response to the disaster on the Gulf Coast, which made the appearance at Jazz Fest a no-brainer. Jazz Fest producer/director Quint Davis told *USA Today:* "You have this work of music called 'We Shall Overcome' that's about the triumph of the human spirit and persevering against all odds, and it's real traditional American music. Jazz Fest would have been the perfect home for [Springsteen's] expression of this music at any time, but talk to us now about We Shall Overcome? We're living it." (See detailed coverage of the Jazz Fest performance beginning on page 52.)

The European dates sold out in record times—less than ten minutes in some instances—and the audiences proved to be quite enthusiastic towards the new material. Springsteen seems to have rewarded them for it by announcing a third leg of the tour, back in Europe this fall for at least 23 more dates (see sidebar). At press time there's been no word regarding future U.S. dates.

While in the U.K. in early May, a bonus show was added to the schedule, taped for broadcast by BBC Radio 2's *Sold on Song*. Taped May 9 at the intimate, 18th century St. Luke's Church in London—the smallest venue Springsteen has played outside the U.S.—the show was aired first on radio and then BBC television later that month. The concert has since aired in the States on PBS' *Great Performances* in July, and it might still be repeating, so check your local listings.



Opening in Boston on May 27 and closing less than a month later with two shows in Holmdel, NJ, the 18-date U.S. leg provided stateside fans with a chance to see Bruce Springsteen al fresco. Over half the shows were staged in outdoor amphitheaters; in Bristow, Virginia, Springsteen joked, "It's nice to play outside. I always played inside, just so the wind wouldn't mess up my hair!" But apparently, the wind blowing through that famous coiffure wasn't enough to kickstart U.S. ticket sales at a European level. Few shows sold out, a strange phenomenon at these smaller venues. Was it the near-$100-per-ticket price tag, the misconception of folk performances, the non-E Street band? Most likely a combination of all these. Springsteen himself weighed in on the topic while in the Bay Area in June. He told Paul Liberatore of the *Marin Independent Journal,* "In places like Paris and London, people were jumping out of their seats for American songs that are 100 years old, but in the Midwest, we're having trouble selling tickets." When asked why he thought that was the case, Bruce offered up the notion of an American "rigidity" to accept him doing anything other than the rock classics he's famous for performing with his E Street Band.

And there's definitely some truth to that, but the marketing of these shows has to share in the blame for any ticket-selling doldrums. Fans are becoming increasingly annoyed with the way tickets are being sold, and it isn't just those ridiculously expensive Ticketmaster service charges. For many of the outdoor shows, lawn seats were not made available to the ticket-buying public until all or most of the costlier, reserved seats were sold—if at all. If lawn seats did become available, in many instances this fact was not widely publicized. At some shows, parents bought those expensive tickets for their kids only to hear weeks later that children under 12 were being let in free! The idea of bringing a blanket and a bucket of chicken while letting the kids dance around to Springsteen... those opportunities don't come around too often. It's a shame they didn't let more people know from the start what was happening, or sell lawn tickets from the beginning.

Because the truth of the matter is what was happening *onstage* was a complete revelation, a joyous exultation that restored many a cynic's faith in folk music and what it can be. These songs seem to jump right out at you and pull you in to make you feel like you're experiencing something that is both timeless and current. And important. It's part history lesson, part gospel revival, and part inspirational, all wrapped up in an enormous sound from a very talented gathering of musicians, eager to show their chops when Springsteen calls out for another solo. J. Freedom du Lac, writing for the *Washington Post,* called it "the best live show I've seen in at least five years."

So, yes, by all means, if you can afford it bring the whole family, but it's also the kind of show you want all your non-Springsteen-lovin' friends to see, too. The good news is that if they happened to miss the shows they can still see plenty of foot-

RUTH BARDHON PHOTO

RUTH BAROHN PHOTO

age from along the way. In May, Springsteen teamed up with AOL Music to provide nightly glimpses of the Seeger Sessions tour for fans online. For the whole of the U.S. tour, AOL Music—with an assist from *Backstreets* providing photos and text—offered a complete and different song from each U.S. show the morning after its performance. Billed as "18 Nights of Bruce," the feature is still available online with a little bit of searching at www.aolmusic.com. There, amongst others, you'll find all 11 of the songs from the new record that became every-night standards ("John Henry," "O Mary Don't You Weep," "Old Dan Tucker," "Eyes on the Prize," "Jesse James" "Erie Canal," "My Oklahoma Home," "Mrs. McGrath," "Jacob's Ladder," "We Shall Overcome," "Pay Me My Money Down").

A few non-album tracks were major staples of the live show as well, making you wonder why they weren't on the record. This is especially true of the reworked Blind Alfred Reed song "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" Springsteen added a couple of post-Katrina verses to it, and it became the show's emotional centerpiece. Similarly, Bruce tinkered with the Pete Seeger song "Bring 'Em Home"—adding the cut-to-the-heart line "They wanna test their grand theories with the blood of you and me"—and it rarely left the setlist in the States. In addition to showing up on "18 Nights of Bruce," performances of "Poor Man" and "Bring 'Em Home" were also broadcast nationwide when Springsteen and the band played both *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* as the tour rolled along.

Interestingly, a non-album track that some might have thought would be played strictly around Jazz Fest—the New Orleans-centric "When the Saints Go Marching In"—also became a deserved every-nighter. Here, Springsteen has included long forgotten verses that many in the audience had never heard . One other cover was very well-received each time it made its way into the show, the Robbie Robertson-penned "Rag Mama Rag," which can be found on The Band's 1970 self-titled album.

As for songs written by Bruce Springsteen, there weren't many—and some of those were almost unrecognizable. From the jump-blues overhaul of "Open All Night" (complete with an Andrews Sisters-style vocal scat intro courtesy of Patti, Lisa and Soozie) to the beautiful Tennessee waltz of "If I Should Fall Behind" and even the blues oddity that was "Cadillac Ranch" fused with the Elvis-popularized "Mystery Train," songs that fans who hadn't bought the new record might have been waiting for were not delivered in any way they'd heard before.

Nonetheless, there is a line you can see from performances of these songs with the E Street band to those on this tour, and it runs right through Soozie Tyrell's fiddle. Ever the new gal over there on E Street, Soozie is really the stage veteran here, having played all these songs onstage with Bruce before. That is not lost on numbers like "Johnny 99" and "Atlantic City," songs that have been given unique arrangements on past E Street tours.

Many of the arrangements on this tour, specifically the vocals, are courtesy of Patti Scialfa. E Streeter since 1984, Patti gets a little lost in the shuffle with so many musicians on stage each night. But do not underestimate her contribution to these performances. Bruce has given plenty of credit to his wife in a number of interviews and from the stage for handling the fantastic blends of voices we hear each night. Though her appearances at the shows have fluctuated—at one stop Bruce jokingly introduced her as "fresh out of semi-retirement"—her influence on these performances is heard nightly.

Soozie and Patti have not, however, been the only members of the ESB to appear on the Seeger Sessions tour. Both Nils Lofgren and Roy Bittan have made guest spots on the rollicking "Pay Me My Money Down," in Phoenix and Los Angeles, respectively.

And it wouldn't be a true Springsteen tour if we didn't get at least one new original song debut. That treat was bestowed upon the Madison Square Garden audience in the third-to-last stop of the tour. Introduced as "an immigrant song for New York City," "American Land" kicked off that evening as well as opening the final two shows of the tour. An Irish reel that owes as much to the Pogues as to the Clancy Brothers, "American Land" may ostensibly be based on yet another tune from Seeger's vast repertoire called "He Lies in the American Land." But Springsteen's offering, with lyrics that paint a vivid portrait of the immigrant experience in the vein of Ry Cooder's "Across the Borderline," bears so little similarity in words or music to "He Lies in the American Land," that to our ears it's a brand new song. It just *sounds* 100 years old.

That night in the Garden, Bruce had a post-song dedication: "for all you travelers out there." That could have many connotations, but perhaps the least of them implies that, for many in the crowd, if you want to see Bruce Springsteen this fall, you better call your travel agent.

Complete coverage from the first two legs, with show-by-show detail from Europe and the U.S., coming soon in Backstreets *#86!*

AUTUMN IN ROME

The third leg of the Seeger Sessions tour begins in Italy and ends in Ireland—kinda fitting, considering Springsteen's heritage. Bruce has scheduled 17 shows that first month back—just call him Mr. October!

Oct 1	**Bologna, ITA**
Oct 2	**Torino, ITA**
Oct 4	**Udine, ITA**
Oct 5	**Verona, ITA**
Oct 7	**Perugia, ITA**
Oct 8	**Caserta, ITA**
Oct 10	**Rome, ITA**
Oct 12	**Hamburg, GER**
Oct 13	**Rotterdam, NED**
Oct 19	**Madrid, ESP**
Oct 21	**Valencia, ESP**
Oct 22	**Granada, ESP**
Oct 24	**Barcelona, ESP**
Oct 25	**Santander, ESP**
Oct 28	**Copenhagen, DEN**
Oct 29	**Oslo, NOR**
Oct 30	**Stockholm, SWE**
Nov 6	**Cologne, GER**
Nov 7	**Antwerp, BEL**
Nov 9	**Birmingham, GBR**
Nov 11	**London, GBR**
Nov 14	**Sheffield, GBR**
Nov 17	**Dublin, IRL**
Nov 18	**Dublin, IRL**
Nov 19	**Dublin, IRL**
Nov 21	**Belfast, NIR**

As always, nightly reports from these shows (as well as any tour or ticket updates) can be found at www.backstreets.com.

ON LIPS

FOLKING AROUND: With Springsteen revisiting the folk boom of the '60s, what's on the lips of the music's progenitors? Let's start with the album's namesake. "It's a great record," Pete Seeger told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "Of course, it's a great honor. But frankly, if I had my brains about me, I would have asked him to take my name off the cover. Some people think I'm along with him." Talking to *Billboard*, Seeger also humbly downplayed his tie to the music: "I didn't pick the songs or craft the arrangements. [For a couple of songs] I only added lines—'Jacob's Ladder' and 'We Shall Overcome.' And, good heavens, I don't need the publicity.". . . Peter, Paul & Mary's Peter Yarrow was more effusive with his praise—or maybe just not as tired of fielding calls as Seeger. Yarrow told the Associated Press he was "ecstatic" about Bruce's new project: "It's great! He always was a folk singer. He always had it in his heart. Of all the people who had the legitimacy to do it, he does.". . . As we've seen with concert tickets, this brand of American folk has strangely proven more popular overseas, and that translated to album sales as well. While *We Shall Overcome* shot to the top of the charts in other countries, in the U.S. the album debuted at number three, with 149,455 copies sold (compared to the 222,000 of *Devils & Dust*). . . . While Springsteen has been playing from a pre-existing American songbook on the road, his own "The Rising" is proving to be a modern-day classic. For the finale of the 2006 CMT Video Awards, Keith Urban turned his own "Better Life" into a surprise medley, moving into "The Rising" to close the show with a mass of folks chanting "li, li, li." . . . This year's Stanley Cup winners, the Carolina Hurricanes, used the song nightly to pump up the team and the crowd. . . . It must be the charm of a champ: well-known to be a Springsteen fan, Miami Heat coach Pat Riley appeared in a hilarious online video celebrating their NBA championship victory in June with a dance to "The Rising" at their post-game party. "Can't see nothing in front of me—get out of the way, Shaq!"

THE KEY OF E: Speaking of the NBA finals, Clarence Clemons was there to perform the national anthem at game five. He also played the 2006 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony and has recorded two songs with Gavin Glass & the Holy Shakers, for their upcoming second album, *Fight or Flight?* Asked by the *Palm Beach Post* about when we'll see him with the E Street Band again, the Big Man replied, "Who? I don't know. Bruce is out doing his thing right now. He said the other day there'll be a new tour in '07." In the meantime, Clarence and Steve Van Zandt are part of an all-star band backing Hank Williams Jr. for ESPN's new Monday Night Football theme, "All My Rowdy Friends are Coming Over Monday Night." The video will debut before kickoff on September 11. . . . Nils Lofgren is on the road in support of a new album, *Sacred Weapon*, with an extensive tour of Germany planned for September. *Sacred Weapon* includes a duet with Willie Nelson on "In Your Hands.". . . In addition to his work on the *Sopranos*, his Underground Garage radio show, and, of course, getting ready for some football, Little Steven puts yet another iron in the fire: look for him to be boogalooing down Broadway with a new theater production company. Renegade Productions, which Van Zandt has formed along with his wife, Maureen, aims to put its first play on the boards in the 2006-'07 season. In recent months Steven has also been promoting a series of Underground Garage live shows in Florida, with headliners like the Romantics and the Buzzcocks. . . . Asked by the *Boston Globe* what he'd been listening to lately, the Buzzcocks' Steve Diggle replied, "To be honest with you, I just got some Bob Dylan bootlegs. He was the original punk. I also quite like Springsteen's *Seeger Sessions*. Last time the Boss was through London, I went to a party and introduced myself. He said, 'I know who you are, Steve. I've got a couple of your records.'"

MAN OF THE HOUR: Soul legend Solomon Burke continues to ride a powerful comeback wave with *Nashville*, an album of country songs including Springsteen's "Ain't Got You."

Detroit Wheels drummer Johnny "Bee" Badanjek takes a ride with Backstreets.

Produced by Buddy Miller, it's due September 26 from Shout! Factory. . . . Johnny Cash's posthumous *American V*, out now, includes his take on "Further On (Up the Road)," a selection suggested to him by his son John Carter Cash. The *New York Times* describes the cover as "a quiet masterpiece... turning [the song] into a portent of resurrection.". . . Pearl Jam closed the first leg of their U.S. tour with two shows at Continental Airlines Arena in New Jersey on June 1 and 3. The last time Eddie Vedder appeared there, he sat in with the E Street Band. This time, of course, he fronted his own band, but Springsteen was evident in spirit. Vedder, in keeping with his tradition of performing before the opening act, treated the faithful to a heartfelt solo acoustic version of "No Surrender." And when the power went out briefly after the band launched into their fifth song, Vedder jokingly wondered whether Springsteen had forgotten to pay the electric bill. Pearl Jam donates five percent of their proceeds to charity, and that night they singled out a longtime beneficiary of Springsteen's own generosity, the Community Food Bank of New Jersey. The influence extended to Pearl Jam's music, too: Vedder told the audience that one of their new songs, "Gone," owes a bit to "Atlantic City" (which he played in the preset at the Borgata some months back). "When I was attempting to figure out that song," he said, "my fingers found their way and it turned out to be this song.". . . Previously, during Pearl Jam's *VH1 Storytellers* taping, Vedder joked: "Bruce Springsteen is still the boss of car songs... but we're working our way up to assistant manager." And talking to *Rolling Stone*, Vedder described how Springsteen helped him resolve some personal issues with his stepfather: "It was a pretty intense conversation.... He exposed me to some truths that he'd processed in a healthy way, that for me were still in a diseaselike state. He helped me cure some things I had been living with for a long time.... When I finally had to meet that guy again, Bruce was the one who got me in the right space to handle it." Is there nothing this guy can't do? Hey, Ben Stiller: time for another installment of "Legends of Springsteen"!

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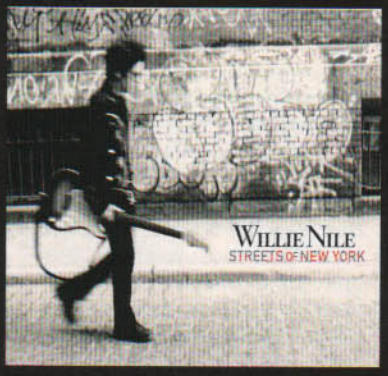

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PERFORMANCE

The project's protagonist listens, then jams

New York Honors *Nebraska*

By Phil Kuntz

Running on Asbury Park's boardwalk with Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* album playing on his iPod last year, David Spelman had a revelation: This is "not exactly jogging music."

Then Spelman, a freelance artistic director for performing arts centers, had an idea: a free tribute concert featuring an eclectic collection of musicians doing renditions of the album's mostly brooding songs. The songs were written 25 years ago (and released the following year, in 1982), so that provided the requisite excuse.

The album's spare acoustic arrangement—the very thing that makes it uninspirational for exercising—makes it a perfect canvas for artists to "bring their own personality to it," Spelman says. "I didn't want this to be cover-band night."

The result was anything but. Dubbed "The *Nebraska* Project," the January 14 concert kicked off the annual New York Guitar Festival, which Spelman co-founded in 1999. It was a fun three hours or so of music that ranged from respectfully frugal reinterpretations to daringly wholesale rearrangements.

Springsteen himself, at one point snuggling wife Patti Scialfa from behind, unobtrusively watched the experiment unfold from near the front of the stage on the audience's outskirts. His presence went mostly unnoticed until he nonchalantly strolled to the mic for the show's encore.

Though Spelman, who turned 40 in April, has a home in Ocean Grove, just south of Asbury Park, and met his wife at the Stone Pony, he says he discovered Springsteen "a little late in life." An accomplished guitarist himself, Spelman says his day job mostly involves classical music, opera and other styles, not rock.

He compares *Nebraska* to an exhibit of Van Gogh drawings he saw. "The paintings are great, they're magnificent, but when you see these simple line drawings, you get more of a sense of who he was as an artist."

Springsteen joins The *Nebraska* Project encore with, from left, Stephan Crump, Otis Taylor, Jen Chapin (with son Maceo) and Kevn Kinney.

ANTHONY COMITINI PHOTO

The *Nebraska* show was modeled on the 2004 guitar festival show that featured artists covering the Bob Dylan classic *Blood on the Tracks*. (That show can be heard online at www.wfuv.org/wfuv/promo/tracks.) One of those artists was the first performer Spelman called for the *Nebraska* show—Jesse Harris, the writer of several songs on Norah Jones' acclaimed first CD. He enthusiastically signed on, saying "I gotta do 'Atlantic City,'" Spelman recalls. Harris gave the project "credibility," helping persuade other artists to perform for what Spelman calls just a token "honorarium" and expenses. Scheduling conflicts prevented some obvious choices from joining, including Steve Earle, Jeff Tweedy, Ryan Adams and Emmylou Harris. The lineup was nonetheless impressive, and some of the evening's best performances came from lesser-known artists.

The venue was the World Financial Center in Manhattan's Battery Park City, across West Street from the World Trade Center site. The stage was set up inside the office complex's massive glass-roofed atrium, the Winter Garden, where two rows of huge palm trees gave the bitterly cold night a tropical setting.

Thanks to ample pre-show publicity, including a write-up in *The New York Times*, the venue was packed. The chairs on the floor were filled, and the atrium's huge centerpiece staircase became bleachers. Others watched from the atrium's second floor.

The host was disc jockey John Platt of public radio station WFUV, which helped sponsor the event and recorded it for a possible future broadcast. He gave a brief account of the album's unusual provenance and told the crowd, "If less is more, *Nebraska* is the most." The album's songs were performed in order, with Michelle Shocked doing its title track, backed by Rich Armstrong's mournful trumpet, which evoked Randy Brecker's work on Springsteen's "Meeting Across the River." She gave the song—written about Charlie Starkweather's 1950s murder spree after Springsteen saw it depicted in the movie "Badlands"—an appropriately weary, at times quavering reading.

Shocked said she had considered toying with the storyline, until she learned that "it's a true story and there wasn't much room to move.... So I decided just to come here and tell the truth, like [Springsteen] had done."

Harris's reedy-voiced "Atlantic City," one of the first songs he ever learned to play on guitar, was backed by drums, bass and Jon Dryden's melodic electronic organ, the rendition's dominant sound.

Platt's questioning of Harris highlighted the clever ambiguity of the lyrics. The DJ said he found optimism in the chorus's refrain of "maybe everything that dies someday comes back." Harris disagreed: "It's a desperate optimism, if anything," he said, noting that its very setting conjures up the "false hope that people get from gambling."

The National's rendering of "Mansion on the Hill" was one of the show's gems. Springsteen is a fan of the Brooklyn-based band and has included their song "About Today" on compilations played before his shows. The song featured singer Matt Beringer's earthily resonant baritone (reminiscent of Leonard Cohen). It opened with supple fiddle and gentle guitar, before the full band, drums and all, joined in after two verses.

"Johnny 99" was performed by Chocolate Genius, otherwise known as Marc Anthony Thompson, who is now a member of Springsteen's Seeger Sessions Band. Sporting a white fedora and playing guitar and harmonica, his gravelly voice was backed by Thomas Bartlett's ethereal-sounding omnichord. Thompson gave the night's oddest song-choice justification: "Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tookie Williams maybe," he said, referring to the recent execution of the murderer-turned-anti-gang-crusader.

Asked in an e-mail about being asked to join the Seeger Sessions Band, which performs its own revamped rendition of "Johnny 99," Thompson replied cryptically: "Prior to The *Nebraska* Project, I'd never heard a single song from that record, nor had I the pleasure of meeting Bruce," he wrote. "You'd have to ask him what led to the invite."

Two folk-rock offspring lent their voices to the evening.

Martha Wainwright—daughter of Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle, and sister of Rufus Wainwright—performed "Highway Patrolman." The late Harry Chapin's daughter Jen Chapin, accompanied only by husband Stephan Crump on standup bass, goosebumped the crowd with an almost jazzy breathy-voiced rendition of "Born in the U.S.A." That was one of two songs performed at the show that Springsteen wrote during the *Nebraska* sessions but released in full-band form later. Harry Chapin was a friend of Springsteen, who is a supporter of the folk icon's World Hunger Year charity, which Jen Chapin now chairs.

The other non-*Nebraska* song was an effectively spare "I'm on Fire" by Harry Manx, who accompanied his gruff singing with plucks on a guitar-like instrument he fashioned from a cigar box and two broomsticks. "It's basically I guess to prove a point, that the music's gotta be in you, not the instrument," he said, to applause.

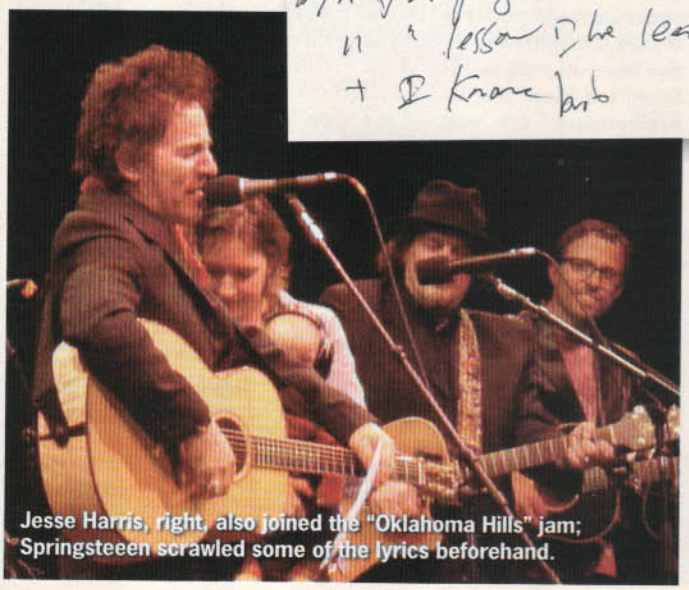
Vernon Reid and Dan Zanes—respectively of Living Colour and the defunct Del Fuegos—teamed up for a bongo-heavy funk version of "State Trooper," which ended with Reid chillingly channeling a fictional cop in a traffic stop that escalates with an air of inevitability: "I'm afraid I'm gonna have to take you in," he concluded.

Laura Cantrell, a radio-DJ-turned-Nashville-phenom, had the night's most countrified song, "Used Cars," with a band featuring a sweet-as-sin mandolin backing her lovely Nanci Griffith-esque voice. She praised *Nebraska* for having the proper mix of "despair" and "real spirited defiance." Her chosen song, she added, had both "the shame of being poor and... the determination to rise above it somehow."

Bluesman Otis Taylor gave the most radical reading. Playing an unrecognizable melody on a tinny-sounding banjo, he blues-talked "Open All Night," muttering most of it almost indecipherably, punctuating the lines with grunts and yeahs. He coaxed the crowd, unsuccessfully, to chant the song's closing line, "Hey ho, rock and roll, deliver me from nowhere."

"My Father's House" was nicely done, with little improvisation, by American Music Club's Mark Eitzel, who gave the evening's most heartfelt tribute. "It's a real honor to do this song because I love it," he said. He declined Platt's invitation to analyze it. "I can't pick it apart," he said. "It's about your dad and heaven, and it's beautiful."

Drivin' N' Cryin's Kevn Kinney, backed by Patti Smith guitarist Lenny Kaye, finished the tribute off with a croaky "Reason to Believe."



Jesse Harris, right, also joined the "Oklahoma Hills" jam; Springsteeen scrawled some of the lyrics beforehand.

ANTHONY COMITINI PHOTO

That set the stage for the obligatory closing jam. Spelman long ago had begun maneuvering to make it special. He sent a note to Springsteen's management, informing them of the event. Guitar Festival General Manager AJ Benson made a few discreet follow up calls. Several hours before the show, Springsteen's folks called up and said he and Scialfa might show up. Word was passed to Shannon Mayers, the World Financial Center's productions director.

Early in the evening, her cell phone rang. "Hey, this is Bruce Springsteen. We're close by, but I think we're lost," she recalls him saying. She had him park his car directly behind the Winter Garden, near the Hudson River. Once inside, Springsteen made his way to Spelman and asked, "Are you the guy from Ocean Grove?" Spelman invited him to join all the musicians in singing Woody and Jack Guthrie's "Oklahoma Hills." Though Springsteen had performed the song less than a year earlier at an early stop on the *Devils & Dust* tour, as well as in 1996 at a Guthrie tribute show in Cleveland, he asked Spelman, "Which one is that?" Spelman sang him the chorus. "Oh, I know this one," Springsteen replied.

Spelman gave him the lyrics and pointed out verses for him to sing. Springsteen mentioned that he didn't have his reading glasses with him and at some point scrawled the words to one verse on the back. (My girlfriend spotted it on the floor later; it's reproduced nearby.) When the time came, Spelman loaned him a guitar—which had to be jerry-rigged with a strap, because Spelman doesn't use one. After the other musicians had crowded the stage, Springsteen appeared. It took several moments for most of the audience to recognize him with an elated ovation. "Bruce, I think you've been outed," Spelman recalls telling him.

"I believe the Boss is in the house," Platt announced.

Typical for such gigs, the song was sloppy, long (nine minutes), and big fun. Others took the first two verses, led by Jen Chapin, holding her newborn boy Maceo (wearing protective headphones and clearly transfixed by Bruce).

After strumming in the background for a bit, Springsteen stepped up and belted out the first of his two verses in that familiar growl (reading from lyrics held by Cantrell): "Many a month has come and gone, since I wondered from my home, in those Oklahoma Hills where I was born. Many a page of life has turned, many lessons I have learned, and I know back in those hills I do belong."

From then on, he conducted the proceedings, at one point getting everyone to stop playing so he could lead them in some a cappella choruses.

When the song ended, Springsteen bowed to the performers. Platt took a stab at one last interview, with comical results: "Did we get any of it wrong? Is there anything I said that was misrepresented, inaccurate?" he asked.

"A lot of the interpretations of the songs... were wrong," Springsteen responded. "Most of the songs were written, as I've said about all rock 'n' roll, to get women to pull their pants down." As the audience guffawed, he thanked the other artists: "I've been honored from my ass to my heels."

Platt tried again: "What is it that you think makes this album resonate for us 25 years later? Do you have a clue?" Springsteen replied, "No," and mumbled something about leaving such things to the audience before walking off. Spelman asked him to perform another song, but Bruce responded simply, "I think that's it."

Springsteen and Scialfa spent the next two hours at an afterparty with the musicians in a bar overlooking the Winter Garden, chatting and posing for photos with all comers.

"He had to be one of the last people to leave," Spelman recalls. "His wife was giving him the universal it's-time-to-go look."

Phil Kuntz is an editor for The Wall Street Journal.

Go Colonials!

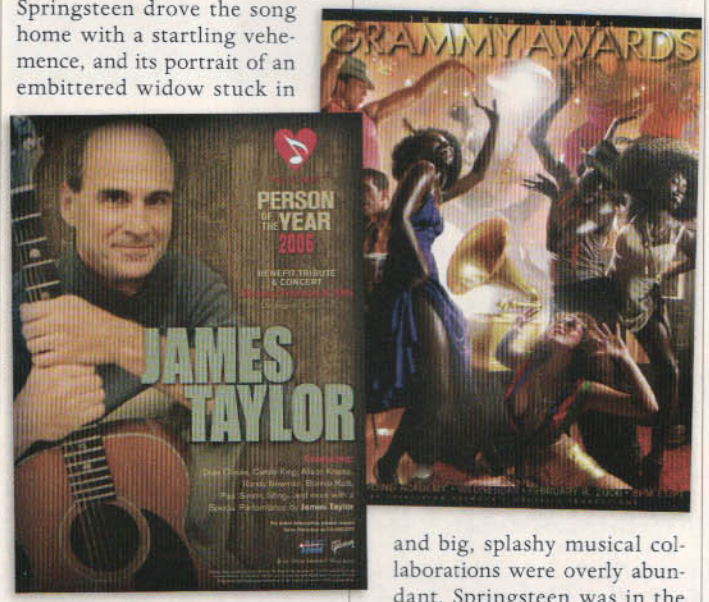
The Offseason

By Andrew E. Massimino

Sports fans have grown accustomed to a certain cycle as they follow their beloved teams. The season ends, players go on vacation, new contracts are negotiated, and the sports pages are full of stories regarding off-the-field incidents. For fans of Bruce Springsteen, these "off-season endeavors" usually come in the form of guest appearances and (hopefully) performances at a variety of events and venues. While there were no holiday shows at the end of 2005, once the New Year rolled around Bruce was out and about, a regular man-about-town in the months leading up to the Seeger Sessions tour.

Right out of the box on January 8—Elvis' birthday—Springsteen was a guest and performer at Jann Wenner's 60th birthday bash at Le Benardin restaurant in New York. Wenner, the Editor and Publisher of *Rolling Stone* magazine, has quite the rolodex of friends: Also there, havin' a party, were John Kerry, Larry David, Robin Williams, Al Gore, Robbie Robertson, and David Bowie. Bruce reportedly performed a song he wrote especially for the occasion—no word yet if it was "I'm Turning into Jann Wenner (And there's Nothing I Can Do)."

The 48th Annual Grammy Awards were held exactly one month later, but before the main event, "Grammy week" kicked off February 6 with the annual MusiCares benefit. Paul Simon, Sting, Sheryl Crow and many other celebs showed up to honor James Taylor, the organization's Person of the Year. Springsteen took the stage and hailed Taylor, the North Carolina-bred singer-songwriter, as "an authentic Southern voice." The Boss and JT had been on the same bill a few times before—most notably in 1979 at the M.U.S.E./*No Nukes* concerts—but this night at the L.A. Convention Center was all about honoring Taylor's artistry and activism. Springsteen performed a song that spoke to both. Recapping the evening in his *Los Angeles Times* article, Richard Cromelin captured it nicely: "As often happens at pop's special events Springsteen was the one who rocked the boat a bit. Armed with a 12-string guitar, harmonica and a voice like a blast furnace, he... unearthed a lesser-known Taylor song, 'Millworker,' written for a failed 1978 Broadway musical based on Studs Terkel's book *Working*... Springsteen drove the song home with a startling vehemence, and its portrait of an embittered widow stuck in



a dead-end life resonated with the kind of social and personal insights that mark Springsteen's own blue-collar vignettes."

And while we're quoting people, here's some wisdom from Sweet Baby James himself that all Springsteen fans should consider while pondering Bruce's own activism: "I'm under no illusions that I'm an expert in anything other than making music. And I think there is a kind of gray area when you take the energy that you've generated because of your music and try to basically channel that into another direction. It's always something you have to think long and hard about, but occasionally I just feel so strongly about things that I can't avoid getting involved in them." Taylor's passion must have inspired his brethren: on this night, MusiCares took in $3 million for their financial assistance program.

On with the show, as in the Big, Big Show, as in Grammy Night. Held at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on February 8, the Grammys were hell-bent this year to make an impression on the home viewer. Most of the awards were given off-stage prior to the show, so speech-givin' was at a bare minimum, and big, splashy musical collaborations were overly abundant. Springsteen was in the house/arena to perform "Devils & Dust," nominated for "Song of the Year," as well as "Best Rock Song" and "Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance." (He won for the last of these, but alas, that award was of the non-televised variety.) Standing alone on the expansive stage, Bruce delivered the soldier's song admirably if unremarkably, accompanied by his own acoustic guitar and harmonica. It was the first and maybe only quiet moment amidst the spectacle of the evening. And as for that minimalist speech-givin', Springsteen punctuated his harp finale with these simple parting words: "Bring 'em home." While pointed, at the time it felt like a concession to brevity in the middle of a bloated show.

Why those particular words, you might ask? Two weeks after the broadcast, plans were announced for a "Bring 'Em Home" concert featuring Michael Stipe of R.E.M., Bright Eyes, Steve Earle and others (held March 20, and followed by a "Bring 'Em Home" speaking tour with activist Cindy Sheehan.) Springsteen had no affiliation with these events, but it sure seemed like a well-timed coincidence. Of course, the more direct answer, we would soon find out, was Springsteen's immersion into the works of Pete Seeger. In a few months time, Springsteen would be playing a revised version of Seeger's song "Bring 'Em Home" to receptive American audiences on a nightly basis.

As for the remainder of Grammy Night, the entire second half of the show felt so rushed it was hard to keep up or enjoy it. Some great performances by Kanye West and Paul McCartney, but very few statues handed out—none to Springsteen. He ended up one for five overall, but hey, if you're going to lose, you might as well lose to artists like U2, Martin Scorsese, and John Prine. Prine later admitted, "It wasn't so surprising beating Springsteen as it was beating Sony. [Prine's record label] Oh Boy is just a small office with three people."

Bruce was back on stage at the end of the night for the condensed combo "tribute" to New Orleans and the late Wilson Pickett. Springsteen and soul legend Sam Moore joined Irma Thomas, Elvis Costello, The Edge, Allen Toussaint, Bonnie Raitt, and Dr. John for a quick but gritty "In the Midnight Hour" dedicated—as Bruce shouted mid-song, since apparently there was no time for an intro—to "the Wicked Pickett," who passed away January 19.

It was only about three weeks after the Grammys that Springsteen announced he had a new record ready for a late April release. It would be the first of his

reported $100 million resigning with Sony/Columbia—a deal that raised eyebrows in the industry and may have ultimately cost a few executives their jobs. Perhaps to ease concerns over the coming folk project, Springsteen attended the first official listening party for *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* on March 7 in midtown Manhattan at Lucille's Grille/ B.B. King's. Joined by Patti Scialfa, Jon Landau and then-Sony Music CEO Don Ienner, Springsteen told the invite-only crowd that the sessions leading to this record reminded him of the eclectic sounds of his early career.

Equal parts "street corner, parlor, church and gutter," the songs were perhaps more upbeat and energetic than the attendees were expecting. That is, when they could actually *hear* the songs being played. Some technical difficulties added to the loose feel of the whole night: on the first song, with audio not reaching half the speakers, Landau went to the control center and promptly killed the working half, too. He and Ienner, moonlighting as audio technicians, were frantically working the controls to find the stereo's sweet spot and restore a full sound. With great comic timing, Springsteen moved through the crowd to center stage and deadpanned, "Do I work for one of the biggest record companies in the world or what?" Buying some time for his stressed out compadres he then joked that "the bar is open... and the BMG side of Sony/ BMG will be paying for the drinks!" Once the sound was restored "Jacob's Ladder," "Pay Me My Money Down," "Old Dan Tucker," and "O, Mary Don't You Weep" were big crowd pleasers. The word was out: Springsteen had delivered a fun and upbeat record—let the exuberance begin.

Ten days later, Don Ienner was given a nice promotion—the title of Sony Chairman to wear above his CEO nameplate. But there was little time for exuberance in Ienner's world. Amidst a massive Sony shakeup, he resigned his position on June 1, effectively ending his 17-year relationship with Columbia Records and his professional association with Bruce Springsteen. In 1989 at age 36, Ienner became president of the label and held on to that position for 13 years—longer than anyone before or since. Best of luck, Don, we'll be looking for you further on up the road.

Before Springsteen could actually get the record out and the tour started, he did have one last event, one last honor that demanded his utmost attention—induction into the Freehold High School Hall of Fame. Unable (or perhaps unwilling) to attend the April 6 event, Bruce sent a delightful and engaging proxy, his mother Adele Springsteen. Along with a few other members of the extended family, Mother Springsteen accepted the honor on Bruce's behalf, noting that her son could not attend because "he was working on a new record." She did bring a short speech that Bruce had given her to read in which he acknowledged that he was a high school "outcast... and at best a mediocre student." Springsteen did take the opportunity to thank everyone and to offer this advice to current Freehold High staff members: "Keep your eyes on the ones who don't fit in. They're the ones thinking outside the box and re-imagining this place we live in."

Springsteen graduated from the school in 1967, and eight years later the boy who "would probably have been voted least likely to succeed" made the simultaneous covers of both *Time* and *Newsweek*. So, what took so long to get him a spot in his high school hall of fame? He'd already made the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—*Born to Run* not legendary enough to get some dap? What's a Colonial have to do, people?! Turns out this was Freehold High's inaugural Hall of Fame class, and Bruce was inducted along with many others, including his friend from childhood, Freehold Mayor Michael Wilson. It might not be the biggest honor for The Boss, but at least it'll give him something to talk about if he makes it to his 40-year high school reunion next year.

As spring came into bloom and April pushed on, this particular off-season came to a close. It had been kind to Bruce Springsteen—he'd been honored, feted, and done the honoring at a number of events. These appearances, along with Springsteen's performances at The *Nebraska* Project and the RCDS fundraiser (covered elsewhere in this issue), kept fans engaged during the "down" part of the cycle. And best of all, like all good off-seasons, it ended with that special kind of anticipation for the start of something new. Play ball!

BOB ZIMMERMAN PHOTOS

March 7: Don Ienner, above, and Springsteen at B.B. King's in NYC, offering a first taste of We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions.

I'd like to thank everyone for the honor. It's especially nice coming from my hometown and my old alma mater. It's kind of funny, really. I spent my years at Freehold Regional pretty much as an outcast and at best a very mediocre student. I would probably have been voted "Least Likely to Succeed".

My only advice to teachers and the administrators would be to keep your eyes on the ones that don't fit in. They're the ones thinking out of the box and reimagining this place we live in... our hometown. You never know where they're going.

So, thank you once again and please show my mother a good time. Without her I may not have survived Freehold Regional High School.

Go Colonials!

Adele Springsteen, with a note to cover for her absent son.

COURTESY OF CARL BEAMS

Next year: a *really* big bake sale

Fifth (and Final?) Year for RCDS Shows

By John Schlicher

"I'm getting a bit misty," Bruce laughingly told the small crowd toward the end of his fifth—and, more than likely, last—Rumson Country Day School Benefit show held at the Stone Pony on May 2.

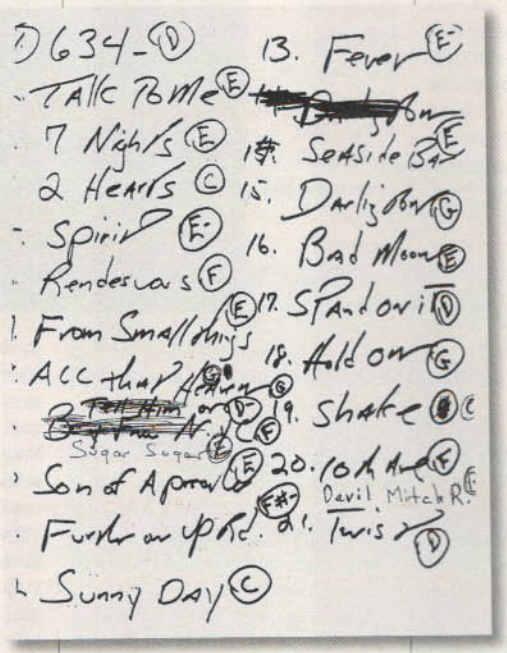
"Not *too* misty... just a little misty," he jokingly added.

For the past four years, the concert has been a much-anticipated date on the school calendar for both teachers and parents alike. The show has been an annual fundraiser for the school attended by the Springsteen children; with the last of the Springsteen clan leaving the school, the tradition seemingly comes to an end with the 2006 performance.

While it culminated with these exclusive club shows, Springsteen's involvement with the school apparently dates back to around 1987, when he moved to Rumson. Some fans recall of hearing stories about Bruce showing up at the school to play at parent dances in the late '80s and early '90s—a great soundboard recording of him sitting in with the Fabulous Greaseband at a school concert in 1987 exists in collecting circles. Soon thereafter, autographed guitars and concert tickets became common items in the school's fundraising auctions.

Bruce stepped up his charitable offerings in 2002, when the fundraiser to beat all fundraisers was brainstormed. Rather than offer items up for a raffle or auction, he would donate his services instead—he'd play a private show just for school parents and faculty down the road at the Stone Pony to raise money for the school. Every family who had a child attending RCDS could buy only one pair of exclusively priced tickets ($1,000/pair the first year; $5,000/pair this year) and, in a tip of the hat to some of the hardest-working people around, teachers and school staff were admitted free.

There were two shows held that first year, and for both shows attendees were allowed to submit requests, many of which Bruce played. As a result, the very first


1. 634-5789 (D)
2. Talk To Me (E)
3. 7 Nights (E)
4. 2 Hearts (C)
5. Spirit (E)
6. Rendezvous (F)
7. From Small Things (E)
8. All That Heaven (E)
9. Sugar Sugar (E)
10. Son of A Preacher (E)
11. Further On (Up The Road) (F#)
12. Sunny Day (C)
13. Fever (E)
14. Seaside Bar Song (E)
15. Darlington County (G)
16. Bad Moon (E)
17. Stand On It (D)
18. Hold On (G)
19. Shake (C)
20. 10th Avenue Freeze-out (F)
21. Twist (D)
Devil With The Blue Dress

RCDS shows were reminiscent of his surprise appearances at the Pony when he would play cover songs with that night's band. The sets were packed with such oldies as "Sugar, Sugar," "Hey Tonight," "634-5789," and "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man," with some Springsteen tunes finding their way into the encores. Over the years, the "takin' requests" aspect of the fundraiser was set aside, presumably to make preparations a little bit easier for Bruce and the polished Bobby Bandiera Band (complete with horns), which has backed him every year, and the ratio of covers to Bruce originals has shifted. In fact, this year's and last year's sets are very similar, both closely mirroring Bruce's 2004 holiday shows with Bobby's band. Nonetheless, the shows still rock and seem to be thoroughly enjoyed by Bruce and those lucky attendees alike.

"Club playing is fun!" shouted an amused Bruce from the stage at this year's show, which featured a bunch of roadhouse numbers including "Stand on It," "From Small Things (Big Things One Day Come)," and "Seven Nights to Rock." Each year, Bruce usually turns things over to Patti Scialfa for a few songs. This year, just 48 hours after the Seeger Sessions Band's New Orleans performance and mere days before their European tour, Patti was home resting her voice (a last-minute decision, judging by the handwritten setlist). "I've been working her too hard!" Bruce explained. "In her place," he went on, "we have the fabulous-looking... Southside Johnny!" Bruce joked that Southside "busted his ass to get over here all the way tonight from Ocean Grove" (which is about five minutes away). After finishing "The Fever" and "This Time It's for Real" with Bruce and the gang, Southside told the crowd in his trademark Grinch-like fashion, "I hated school!"

The crowd did shots with Bruce as he toasted them over the course of the evening, thanking them for all the fun they had together over the years, and he joked about how his involvement with the local school originally began when bought his Rumson residence. "All I can say is I got a lot more than I bargained for.... The only thing I remember when I moved in was, 'Damn, I hope they keep these little bastards off my lawn!'" he added with a laugh. "That was my main consideration at the time."

"Now it's years later.... I don't know what to say except here's to ya. We had a great time."

Leaving the crowd with one last goodwill gesture, after one of the evening's final toasts, Bruce jokingly told the crowd that the school headmaster had decided that school was going to be delayed the following day—which of course, was met with cheers and applause. After some time, he announced, *"No* school tomorrow. I just got the word—no school for anybody tomorrow!" The crowd erupted a bit louder than before. Then he hesitated and added, "There's no *work* tomorrow, either!" which was met with *everyone's* approval. Soon he totally conceded: "Ah, the whole fuckin' day has been called off!"

It was a nice thought, considering it was a school night. But I'm sure the following day went on as planned for everyone. Teachers taught class. Parents went to work. And someone caught a plane to Dublin. Albeit, some with headaches.

A Class Act

May 2, 2006
The Stone Pony
Asbury Park, NJ

- 634-5789
- Talk to Me
- Seven Nights to Rock
- Two Hearts
- Spirit in the Night
- Rendezvous
- From Small Things (Big Things One Day Come)
- All That Heaven Will Allow
- Sugar, Sugar
- Further On (Up the Road)
- Waitin' on a Sunny Day
- The Fever*
- This Time It's For Real*
- Darlington County
- Seaside Bar Song
- Stand on It
- Shake
- Tenth Avenue Freeze-out
- Detroit Medley (includes "Devil with the Blue Dress," "Good Golly, Miss Molly," "C.C. Rider," and "Jenny Take a Ride")
- Twist and Shout

*with Southside Johnny

We shall overcome again

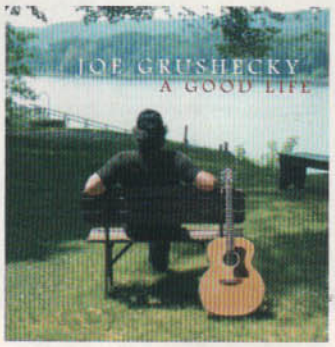
Seeger Sessions Revisited

This spring saw two more albums added to Springsteen's catalog—*Hammersmith Odeon, London '75* and *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*. While there was no vinyl released for the Hammersmith show, *We Shall Overcome* keeps the black circle spinning with a two-LP set from Columbia that spreads the 13 album tracks over four sides of heavy, 180-gram vinyl. Not included: the DualDisc's two bonus tracks, "Buffalo Gals" and "How Can I Keep From Singing?"

Back on the little silver discs, a "Special Edition" of the *Seeger Sessions* album is tentatively slated for October. An unusual move presumably prompted by the overwhelmingly positive reaction to Springsteen's live-only selections, it's sort of a Version 2.0 of the April release, expanded with previously unreleased tracks (and likely moving those aforementioned bonus tracks from DVD limbo to CD). While unconfirmed as of press time, we're expecting tour favorites "Bring 'Em Home," "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" and "American Land" to make the cut. (A studio version of "Bring 'Em Home" and the live "Poor Man" from New Orleans have been available in streaming quality on www.brucespringsteen.net.)

The quick reissue will surely frustrate some fans. Begrudgingly accustomed to this phenomenon with the release of "special edition" DVDs, consumers are rarely faced with upgrading a new audio purchase less than six months later. Why not a *Chimes of Freedom*-style EP instead? On the other hand... hey, new Springsteen recordings. Plus, their availability for download on iTunes may soften the blow.

In any case, the new edition will also be bolstered by expanded DVD content—including a longer version of the behind-the-scenes film, which aired on CMT in May—and an expanded booklet as well. And in a welcome step back from the somewhat troublesome DualDisc technology, the CD and DVD content will be on two separate discs. That's good news for anyone who had problems playing the *The Seeger Sessions* 1.0 DualDisc—at least, good news for those who don't mind buying the same record twice.



Joe Grushecky's *A Good Life* reuinites the Pittsburgh houserocker with his old pal Springsteen for their first studio collaboration in nearly ten years, since 1997's *Coming Home*. Due on August 15 on Schoolhouse Records, *A Good Life* leads off with "Code of Silence," with Bruce and Joe sharing lead vocals. This song, which the pair co-wrote, has already won a Grammy—for the live E Street Band version previously released on Springsteen's *Essential*—but this is its first studio recording. Springsteen is featured on three more of the album's tracks: "Is She the One," "A Good Life," and "Searching for My Soul."

In the coming months, also look for Springsteen to guest on new albums from two other artists—both living legends, both joined by a slew of younger musicians for long-awaited returns to the studio. First up is Sam Moore, whose *Overnight Sensational* is due August 29 from Rhino Records. After performing together at Springsteen's holiday shows and at the 2006 Grammys, Bruce and Sam share a duet of "Better to Have and Not Need" on Moore's new record. It's also a *Human Touch* reunion of sorts: Moore sang on Springsteen's 1992 album, and *Overnight Sensation* producer Randy Jackson—king of the Dawg Pound—played bass.

Redemption, a long-delayed new platter from Jerry Lee Lewis, is now slated for September on Columbia. Along with such rock royalty as John Fogerty, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Neil Young, and Jimmy Page, Springsteen has pitched in for a Killer version of "Pink Cadillac."

In October 2005, Bruce surprised radio listeners when he showed up for his local NPR station's pledge drive, appearing for an interview and performance on Brookdale Community College's 90.5 The Night (see "My Hometown Station," *Backstreets* #83/84). Now, that exclusive live-in-the-studio recording of "If I Should Fall Behind" appears on *Live at the Night Volume 3*. The catch: the CD is only available with a donation to the station at the $150 level. Other artists include Suzanne Vega, Indigo Girls, and Jesse Malin. Visit www.90.5thenight.org.

Another favorite cause of Springsteen's is World Hunger Year, and he has contributed a track to their new benefit CD, *SERVE*. Sponsored and released by Hard Rock International and Sony/BMG, *SERVE* features "Secret Garden" (String Version), previously available on now-out-of-print CD singles, plus tracks from the Strokes, Ray LaMontagne, the Hold Steady, and more. Net proceeds will go to help the W.H.Y. program Artists Against Hunger & Poverty. Visit www.hardrock.com or www.worldhungeryear.org for ordering details.

If you've been looking for an album with both Bruce and Kelly Clarkson—or you're just a completist—you might pick up the *2006 Grammy Nominees* compilation. It includes "Devils & Dust," eventual winner for "Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance," among its 21 tracks.

The *Dead Man Walking* soundtrack, featuring Springsteen's lead-off title track, has been reissued for its tenth anniversary in a "Legacy Edition." No new Bruce-related material here, but the CD adds an extra Eddie Vedder cut, and a bonus DVD captures 1998's "Not in Our Name: Dead Man Walking—The Concert," with performances by Vedder, Steve Earle, Lyle Lovett, and Ani DiFranco.

Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll, the celebrated 1987 Chuck Berry feature directed by Taylor Hackford (and featuring some hilarious moments with Springsteen among the film's interviewees) has finally come to DVD, from Image Entertainment. A ton of bonus material makes up for the wait: the standard edition is a two-disc set, and if that's not enough, a four-disc set has a total of seven hours of never-before-seen footage. Don't look for much Bruce besides what's in the original film, though; if you only need a single-disc version, Starbucks has an exclusive DVD/CD set, pairing the feature film (plus some slimmed-down bonus features) on one DVD, along with a CD of Berry hits.

No Bruce, no problem for LOD6

Benjamin Keeps Shining the Light

By Anthony D'Amato

Faith and hope: that was the message Bruce Springsteen brought with him from Asbury Park to New Orleans. It was also the message for which Bob Benjamin was honored that very same weekend in New York City, at the 12th Annual Parkinson's Unity Walk. Benjamin's tireless efforts to raise money for Parkinson's research through his annual Light of Day concerts earned him the 2006 Alan Bonander Humanitarian of the Year Award. Team Light of Day, an organized group of fundraisers and walkers which features local Asbury Park musicians including Frankie McGrath of Maybe Pete, Robert Dye, Mimi Cross, Bobby Strange, and Boccigalupe, managed to raise nearly $30,000 for this year's walk. That figure becomes even more impressive when you consider that it's in addition to the hundreds of thousands Benjamin raises through his concerts.

The most recent Light of Day shows, held the first weekend in November 2005, didn't seem to garner as much press as in previous years, since Springsteen was otherwise occupied. But any rock fan would still be hard pressed to find a line-up with as many talented, earnest, hardworking, passionate, and generous musicians as at Light of Day. Best of all, the concerts were for a pair of great causes, benefiting not only their more well-known recipient, the Parkinsons' Disease Foundation, but also the ALS Association of Greater Philadelphia in honor of Joan Dancy, late fiancée of longtime Springsteen personal associate Terry Magovern.

Back in 2000, Bob Benjamin, a Parkinsons' sufferer, founder of Schoolhouse Records, and manager/promoter of Joe Grushecky among many other acts, organized the first annual Light of Day concert at the Stone Pony in Asbury Park. Through his contacts in the music industry, Benjamin was able to put together an impressive lineup of talent, and a very special unbilled guest, Bruce Springsteen, even showed up. The show turned out to be a tremendous success in raising funds for Parkinson's research, and, over the past six years, Light of Day has become a much anticipated annual concert event. For Light of Day 6, the event was extended to take place over three nights, with concerts held at both the Stone Pony here in Asbury Park, and at the much larger Starland Ballroom in Sayreville, New Jersey. Each previous year, Springsteen has made an appearance to jam with Joe Grushecky and the Houserockers and other friends. Still, despite the fact that Springsteen did not stop by, LOD6 may have provided fans with the best shows yet.

ANTHONY D'AMATO PHOTO

Above: *Benjamin, with managee Dawne Allyne, John Eddie, and Pete Yorn in November at LOD6.*
Right: *The Humanitarian of the Year, honored at the 12th Annual Parkinson's Unity Walk in Central Park, April 29, 2006.*

MARSHA BADER PHOTO

The first show, Friday, November 4 at the Stone Pony, was a perfect example of what makes the Light of Day so special. It's not just any night at the Stone Pony that you could find Gary U.S. Bonds and Southside Johnny singing "Murder in the First Degree" together, or "Son of a Preacher Man" with Soozie Tyrell. Southside also joined La Bamba's Big Band for several songs. The Big Band, with their unique blend of soul, funk, and rock & roll, is always a treat—especially when they parade through the audience and around the front bar without missing a note. Keep in mind that setting up the Stone Pony stage for an 18-piece big band is quite an impressive feat in itself. Other artists on the main stage that night included Robert Earl Keen, whose brand of earnest, Texas country-rock was something new for most of the crowd. There was even a second, acoustic stage set up for inbetween main stage sets that featured artists like Nick Clemons, son of the Big Man, Clarence Clemons. Though the acoustic sets were short, I was impressed by the younger Clemons' talents as a singer and songwriter.

The highlight of Friday, though, was undoubtedly headliner Pete Yorn. For New Jersey native Yorn, this was his first performance back in the Garden State since 2003. That show, a sold-out night at the Community Theater in Morristown, became his latest release, *Live from New Jersey*. This year was Yorn's first Light of Day.

"I met Bob Benjamin right when I put out *Musicforthemorningafter*," Yorn told *Backstreets*, referencing the 2001 release of his debut album on Columbia records. "He asked me to be a part of the shows, but scheduling always conflicted. I'm not on tour this time, so it finally worked out."

Yorn and his backing band, the British rock group Minibar, won over crowds both Friday night at the Stone Pony and Saturday night at the Starland Ballroom in Sayreville. Both sets drew heav-

ily from Yorn's first two releases, *Musicforthemorningafter* and *Day I Forgot*, featuring mostly fast-paced rockers like "Murray," "For Nancy (cos it already is)," "Crystal Village," and "Black." Yorn also peppered both sets with covers ranging from Junior Kimbrough's bluesy "I Feel Good Again" to John Lennon's "Jealous Guy."

Saturday night also featured standout performances by New Yorker and Light of Day regular Willie Nile; Jennifer Glass, whose beautiful voice can be heard covering Springsteen's "Bobby Jean" on another project of Benjamin's, the benefit album *Light of Day: A Tribute to Bruce Springsteen*; and Jesse Malin, another New Yorker rapidly gaining popularity in New Jersey.

For Malin, this was his third year at the Light of Day, and he's more than happy to do whatever he can in support of his friend Bob Benjamin.

"Bob's just a real fan of rock and roll," explains Malin. "He's very driven, very strong, very real."

Joe Grushecky was Saturday night's headliner, and though many fans came expecting to see him play with Springsteen, it would have been difficult to be disappointed in the set. The Houserockers played their hearts out (as they always do), tearing through gritty, no-frills rock songs like "Code of Silence," which he co-wrote with Springsteen, "Talking to the King," and the brand new "Lake Ponchartrain," written about the flooding in New Orleans.

Grushecky took the stage again on Sunday night at the Starland Ballroom, which had been transformed into a candlelit, seated venue for the first ever Light of Day in the Raw.

Light of Day in the Raw was an adaptation of Jersey Shore manager/songwriter Gordon Brown's Writers in the Raw project, which features four songwriters in the round with only their acoustic guitars, their songs, and the stories behind them. Light of Day in the Raw featured two sets of five songwriters, some of whom performed solo and some of whom were accompanied on guitar or piano for certain songs.

In addition to Grushecky, who broke out some of his more personal, sensitive songs like "Only Lovers Left Alive" and "All I Want From You," the first set featured local favorite Joe D'Urso, Dawne Allynne, roots-rocker John Eddie, and another performance from Malin.

The second set featured terrific songs from crowd favorite Jeffrey Gaines and a captivating and sultry "Sunshine of Your Love" from Jess Klein. The later lineup also included Pat Guadagno, Rob Dye, and a third appearance by Yorn, who covered Springsteen's "New York City Serenade" and "Dancing in the Dark."

The bare, stripped-down performances turned out to be the unexpected highlight of the weekend for many fans, providing an intimate glimpse into the songwriting process of some of their favorite artists. The laid back format also provided the artists with opportunities to personally interact with the crowd and each other in a way not possible during electric sets. Malin told a few of his trademark raunchy stories from his youth; Guadagno, though not a songwriter himself, played a set of terrific covers by classic songwriters like Warren Zevon and provided comic relief with "You Don't Have to Be Drunk to Be an Asshole." Gaines took on the role of host and song-by-song commentator for the second set, and as all the performers left the stage for what they thought was the final time, Yorn plugged his guitar back in for an impromptu rendition of the Beach Boys' "Surfer Girl," which he had hastily prepared in the dressing room only a few minutes before his set.

"I might not know all the words to this song, so you'll have to help me out," Yorn told the crowd.

He started out solo, but by the end of the song, all of the performers and Benjamin had joined Yorn onstage to close it out. Malin grabbed a guitar from Joe D'Urso and led the packed stage through "Hungry Heart" to end a wonderful evening of music for an appreciative crowd.

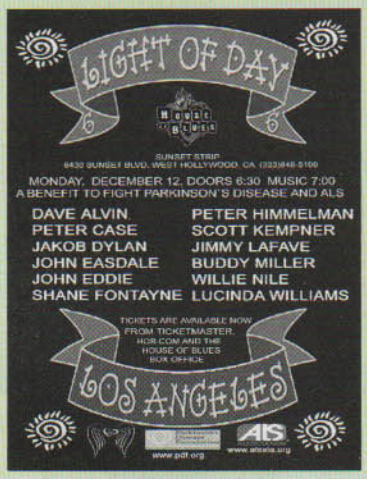
It's always impressive to see how everyone comes together to make the Light of Day so special. From Bob Benjamin and Tony "Boccigalupe" Amato, who put in endless amounts of work organizing the shows, to the artists, the fans, and all the volunteers, Light of Day is truly a group effort.

"I'm a New York outsider," joked Malin, "but it's nice to come here and feel this sense of community."

And while Springsteen might be a bigger name than anyone on the bill for the Light of Day this year, that didn't seem to really matter. It was the combination of love and dedication from all the artists and fans that made it such a success, and no single artist could have created that on their own.

As Malin put it, "People look at this show and ask, 'Who's the headliner?' Well, Parkinson's is the headliner."

Greetings from Hollywood



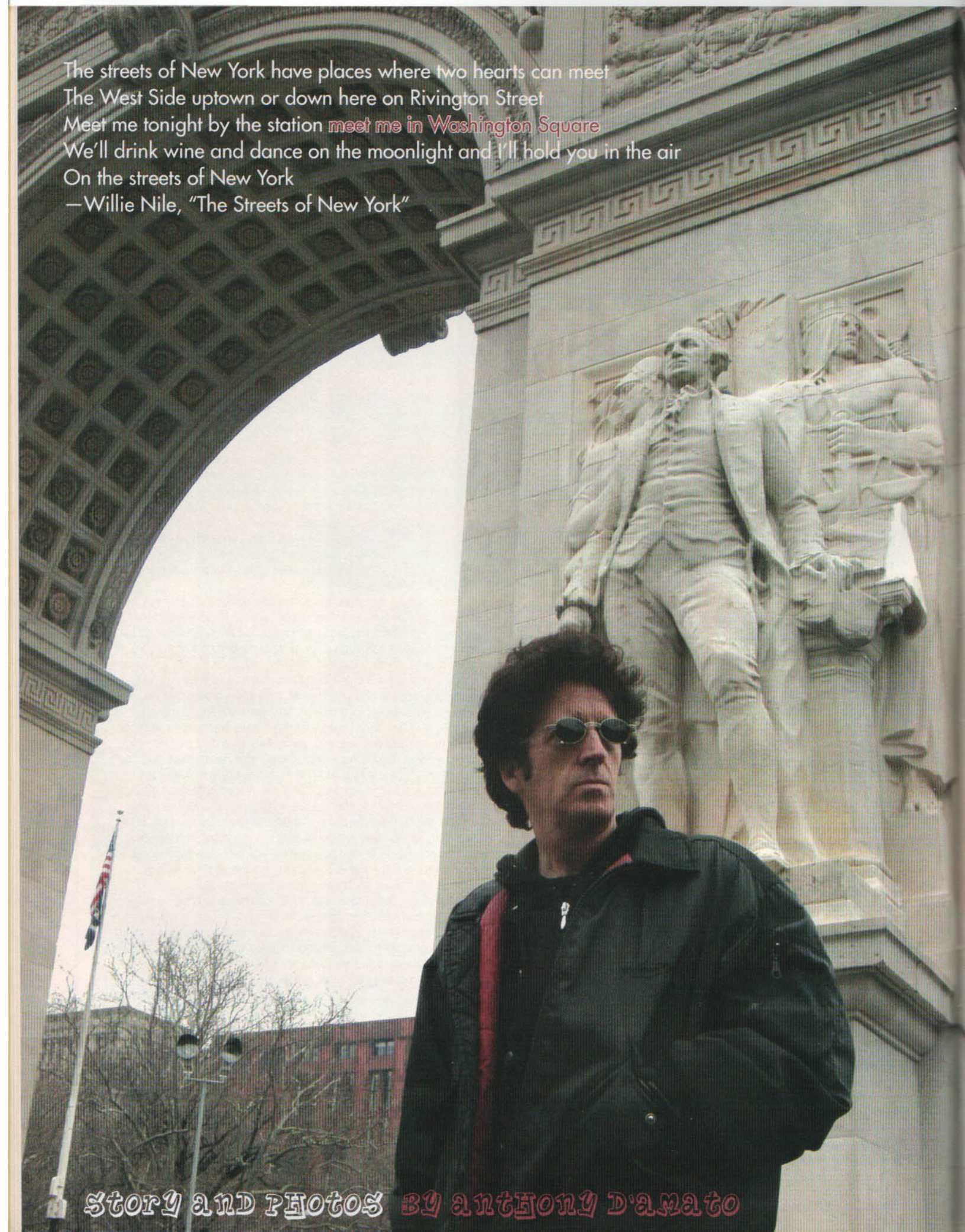
Sometimes it can be very frustrating being a *Backstreets* reader outside of the Tri-State area. We can't just hop on the Parkway to Asbury Park every time John Eddie is playing at the Stone Pony. So many of the great East Coast-based bands can't even afford to tour without the benefit of a major record company support. Even in a big city like Los Angeles, it's not often that we get to see certain performers live because they just don't get out here much.

So it was with great fanfare and much anticipation that the House of Blues on the world famous Sunset strip played host to a "Light of Day" benefit concert to raise money and awareness in the fight against Parkinson's disease and ALS. Bob Benjamin has turned these concerts into an annual event in Asbury Park, but this December 12, 2005 concert was the first time such an event was held in Los Angeles, and the crowd was not disappointed. At times it felt like the Pony had been recreated on the West Coast, and with so many references to bands that had "just arrived today from New Jersey," it was easy to imagine everybody had arrived on the same bus like some traveling Motown Revue.

Unfortunately, the show was a little disorganized (as so many benefit shows often are), and there did not appear to be a real host of the evening. The more seasoned performers had the good sense to introduce themselves (although many of them needed no introduction). All in all, though, it was a fantastic night for music, especially for anybody starved for a little bit of the East Coast bar scene. Willie Nile was incredible, and the always enjoyable John Eddie proved that his recent numerous appearances in the L.A. area were starting to pay off in the form of an actual West Coast following. Shane Fontayne turned in a really memorable performance, particularly on a duet with his son. There were great sets from Peter Case, Peter Himmelman, and Scott Kempner—I'm going to guess that their respective websites got quite a few hits in the days following this show. A special mention also goes out to the members of Maybe Pete, who turned in a very nice set despite the fact that the much of the band was still back east. Many of the performers had wonderful things to say about Bob Benjamin and expressed some very personal tales of their own experiences with Parkinson's disease and ALS. Los Angeles legend Dave Alvin even wrote a song about his father, who suffered from ALS.

It's a shame that it took such terrible diseases to bring so many great musicians together here in Los Angeles, but these are performers with great hearts, and it's nice to see something positive coming out of an otherwise tragic situation. Thanks to Bob Benjamin for making it all possible, and here's hoping that the west coast Light of Day concert becomes as big of an annual event as the original.

—Bill Normyle



The streets of New York have places where two hearts can meet
The West Side uptown or down here on Rivington Street
Meet me tonight by the station meet me in Washington Square
We'll drink wine and dance on the moonlight and I'll hold you in the air
On the streets of New York
—Willie Nile, "The Streets of New York"

Story and Photos By Anthony D'Amato

WILLIE NILE
new york groove

WILLIE NILE DOESN'T just know the streets of New York, he lives and breathes them. New York City is as much a part of Nile as his scruffy black hair, his wry smile, or maybe even as much as rock 'n' roll. It should come as no surprise, then, that Nile's latest album, *Streets of New York*, is far and away his best. A jubilant celebration of the city and the cast of characters that live there, *Streets of New York* reflects Nile's decades of living in a place that's shaped his entire being. It was a long time coming, though.

Over lunch at the Café Reggio, a cozy little Italian place that's one of the oldest cafés in Greenwich Village, Nile remembers his very first trips into the city.

"I would hitchhike down in the late '60's, early '70s and spend a few days wandering around the city," says Nile, who grew up in Buffalo.

Those trips sparked his love for New York, and after graduating from SUNY Buffalo, where he majored in philosophy and spent his free time writing poetry and songs, Nile moved to the city for good.

"I had written songs, and I wanted to make records, so I figured I'd come to New York," he explains. "The first time I played I got offered a record deal, and I thought, 'Well this is pretty easy!'"

Nile wasn't interested in the offer from the tiny label, though, so he passed on it. The next few years found the songwriter, who couldn't afford a backing band at the time, playing solo acoustic around the city in clubs like Folk City on West 3rd Street (now disappointingly the Fat Black Pussycat lounge), Kenny's Castaways, and the Bottom Line.

"I was writing rock 'n' roll songs, though," Nile laughs. "I'd be jumping up and down on the stage with an acoustic guitar—they must have thought I was nuts... they were probably right."

It was after a 1978 performance at Kenny's Castaways, though, that late *New York Times* music critic Robert Palmer discovered Nile and wrote a glowing article in praise of the young musician. The record labels came knocking, and Nile ultimately signed with Arista Records, releasing *Willie Nile* in 1980 and *Golden Down* the very next year. Nile jumped from never having played with a full electric band to touring with The Who at their personal request in the span of just a few years, something most musicians can only dream about.

Back in the Café Reggio, Nile pauses in his story. He's recognized someone crossing the street.

"See that man talking to himself?" he asks. "He's a fantastic guitar player. He's probably writing a song right now..."

Nile always has his eyes open, and that's part of what makes him such a great songwriter. He's always observing, whether it's people, or buildings, or nature, or art, trying to learn whatever he can.

As we walk through Washington Square Park, he points out the tree that used to be used for lynching; the spot where Philippe Petit, the legendary street performer who walked a tightrope between the towers of the World Trade Center, used to set up his rope and walk between a lamppost and a tree; the site of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire; the street corner where he saw Bo Diddley walking along with his guitar slung across his back.

"Do you know the painting 'Nude Descending a Staircase?'" he asks before launching into the story of its painter, Marcel Duchamp, and the Washington Square arch. Apparently one night in the early 1900s, Duchamp and 20 or 30 of his friends snuck up on top of the Washington Square arch with some fireworks and horns and champagne and declared the Village a separate country—an independent nation for the arts where people are treated with compassion.

"Time to do that again," Nile says with a mischievous grin.

Nile must have had those same desires for artistic independence back in the mid-1980s when he ran into legal trouble with his management. Which led to legal trouble with attorneys. Which led to legal trouble with his record label.

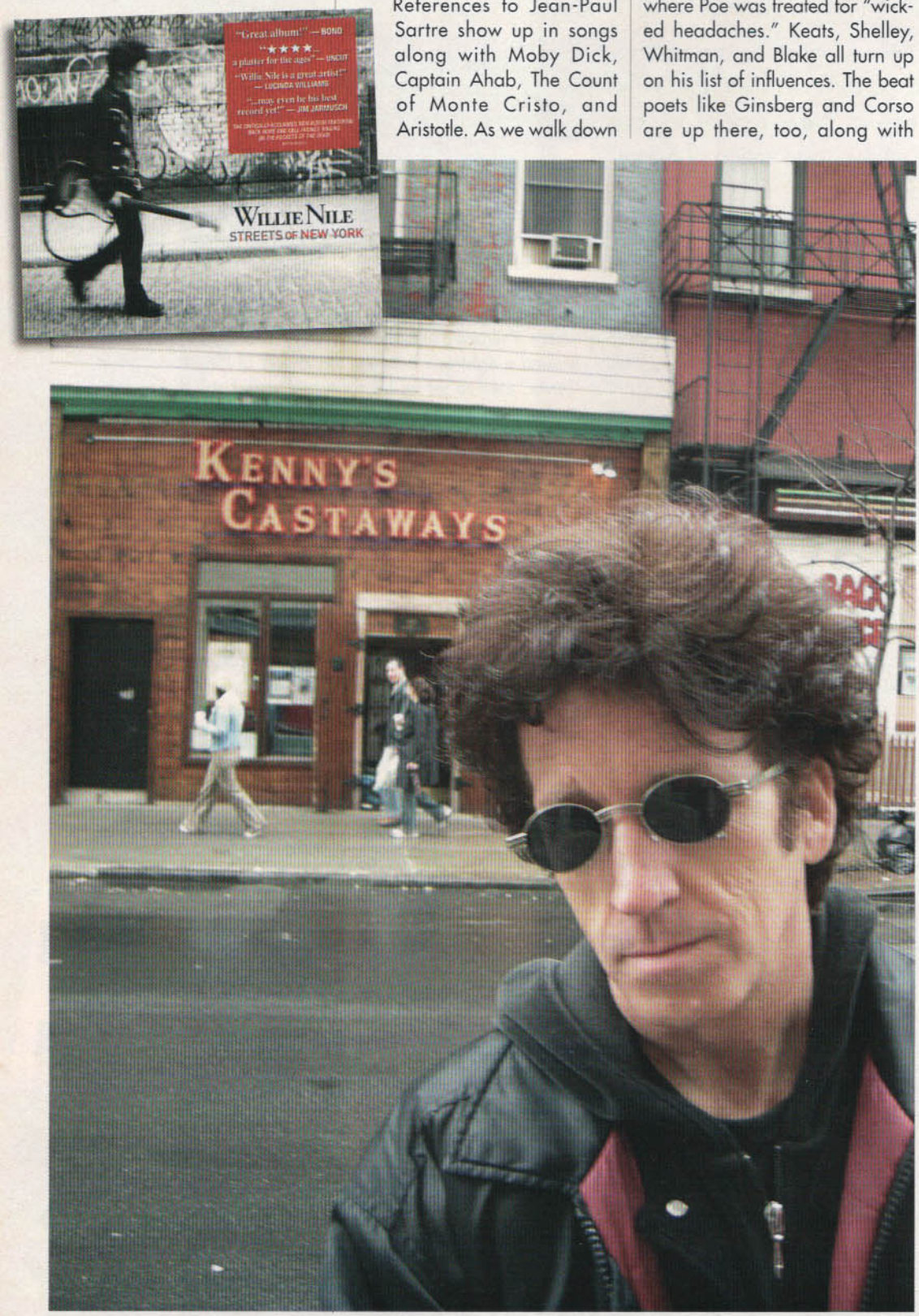
"All of a sudden, all I was doing was business," remembers Nile. "It made me very disillusioned. I just thought,

'I didn't come here to do this, I came here to make music. To hell with this.'"

So Nile left New York behind and moved back to Buffalo with his wife and family to raise his two daughters and two sons. Though he dropped out of life in the New York music scene, Nile continually made trips back to the city to keep his name fresh. More importantly, he never stopped writing.

"I write," says Nile. "That's what I do."

Clearly, Nile reads, too. References to Jean-Paul Sartre show up in songs along with Moby Dick, Captain Ahab, The Count of Monte Cristo, and Aristotle. As we walk down Waverly Place, he points out Edna St. Vincent Millay's house, where writers used to meet on Thursday evenings to try out their new pieces. In 1847, Poe read "The Raven" for the very first time there, and just up the street, Nile points out the place where Poe was treated for "wicked headaches." Keats, Shelley, Whitman, and Blake all turn up on his list of influences. The beat poets like Ginsberg and Corso are up there, too, along with Lou Reed, Randy Newman, Tom Waits, and Bruce Springsteen.



I ask if his songs are the place where intellectualism and rock 'n' roll meet.

"The cool thing about rock 'n' roll is that it can take anything," he says. "It can take nonsense lyrics to high-brow to whatever. It can take all those things. For me personally, I'm inspired by music that has some sort of salvation in it... that can help make sense of the world, whether it's just 'let's have fun' from the Ramones or something deeper from Bob Dylan, Randy Newman, or Bruce Springsteen."

"Bruce has a wide spectrum," he explains, "from 'Let's blow the roof off the place and party' to dark, deep, introspective poetry. The cool thing about rock 'n' roll is that you can do anything with it, from lunacy to clarity and everything in between. How literate that is, how fancy the words are, that depends on the artist. It doesn't matter, really."

"If I was born in another era," Nile goes on, "I would have just been a poet. I often wonder if guys like Walt Whitman would have put a band together, you know? I'm sure Arthur Rimbaud would have had a band. No question about it. He'd have been over at CBGB with a rock band in no time."

Back in Buffalo, it was that itch to be back at CBGB's and other clubs with his own rock band that got to Nile, and after nearly a decade of on-and-off living away from New York, he was ready to come back to the city and pick up where he left off. Unfortunately, it wasn't that easy.

"No one was interested," remembers Nile. "It [the music industry] is very fickle, and understandably so, it's no mystery."

As if getting signed to a major label once isn't hard enough, Nile found himself seeking a new home for his music, and in 1988, he signed with Columbia Records. In 1991, he released *Places I Have Never Been*, which featured Roger McGuinn,

Richard Thompson, and Loudon Wainwright III among other collaborators. Though it received high praise from critics, the album didn't fare well commercially.

"It was the wrong time, wrong place," says Nile. "The guy that signed me was on the way out, so I didn't have any support at the label."

The next year, Nile wrote a song called "Hard Times in America," which he wanted to release right away as it was an election year. He put it out on an EP for a small West Coast label, and hit the road in the U.S. and Europe to play shows so he could pay the bills.

Nile kept writing through the '90s and put together a band that included Rich Pagano, Andy York, and Brad Albetta, to play some new songs he had been working on.

"I said 'Well, let's cut some demos,'" recounts Nile, "'just for fun.' It came out so good I said, 'Well this is a record, let's just finish it.'"

That record was *Beautiful Wreck of the World*, released in 1999 on Willie's own Riverhouse Records. The album was a critical success, garnering Top Ten listings from magazines like *Billboard* and the *Village Voice* and reaching the finals in the Independent Music Awards for Album of the Year. Bono called it "a classic," and Lucinda Williams described "On the Road to Calvary (For Jeff Buckley)," a song Nile wrote for the late songwriter with whom he was scheduled to work before his untimely death, as "one of the most beautiful songs I have ever heard."

As Nile prepped his next record, he never intended for it to be a concept album, but as the songs came together over two-and-a-half years of recording, it was clear that *Streets of New York* needed to be the title.

"I realized when I put the songs together, there was a New York theme to it," he explains. "The songs really reflected my years living here, and I could see the influence of the city on those songs. There was a lot of New York imagery."

"Arthur Rimbaud would have had a band. No question about it. He'd have been over at CBGB with a rock band in no time."

"The Day I Saw Bo Diddley in Washington Square" comes out of Nile's fleeting vision of the blues legend from Washington Square Park, and "The Faded Flower of Broadway" was inspired by an elderly woman who sells her paintings on the street. The album's title track is a beautifully melodic piano song that captures both the majesty and mystery of the city at once.

"I love it," Nile says of New York. "It's dirty, dark, and dangerous—it's got the three D's. But it's also magical and interesting and a great place for a writer."

The release of the album finds Nile back in the spotlight, selling out shows in the city and earning rave reviews from critics and fellow musicians from Jesse Malin to Lou Reed to Bono. Nile found himself back inside Kenny's Castaways recently for an interview for NPR's Nationwide.

"She said, 'Pick someplace you're comfortable,'" Nile says of his interviewer. He chose Kenny's, which has now changed slightly from the old days when it was his hangout. For one, there's a new rug on the stage. During our visit, Nile points out where he used to stomp and kick his left foot to keep time while he played until he wore a hole in the rug. Another big change is the entranceway. Now it's plastered with photocopies of signed album covers and photos of everyone from Steve Forbert to the New York Dolls to Bruce Springsteen. Sure enough, among them is one with "Love and kisses, Willie Nile" scrawled across it. A closer look reveals several pictures of Nile along with Robert Palmer's *New York Times* article that started everything 28 years ago. This is Nile's first time seeing all this, and he can't get over it, picking out old friends in other pictures and seeing shots of himself from nearly 30 years ago.

"That's bugged, man," he says with a chuckle. "I'm going to have to come back here with my camera and get some pictures of this."

As Nile strolls through the Village, it's clear this is where he belongs. It seems as if he knows every little facet of every single building, every single person, every single street. And if you listen closely, it's all there on the new album: Philippe Petit, the Faded Flower of Broadway, Bo Diddley, Edgar Allen Poe and his wicked headaches... they're all a part of the album. And some night, when no one's expecting it, don't be surprised to see Willie Nile on top of the Washington Square Arch with a guitar, singing these songs and declaring artistic independence for the Village once and for all.

"Streets of New York" lyrics ©2006 Willie Nile Music (ASCAP), reprinted with permission. The album is out now on the 00:02:59 label. Visit Willie's website at www.willienile.com.

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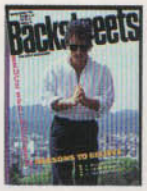

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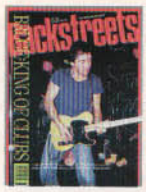

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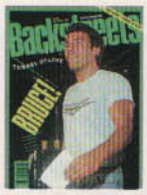

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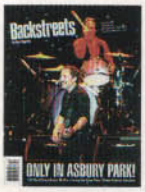

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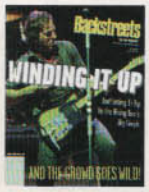

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SINCE THE RELEASE of *Nebraska* in 1982, Bruce Springsteen's artistic journey has intermittently brought him to the crossroads of folk music and politics.

IN THE LATE 1980s AND 1990s, he participated in several WOODY GUTHRIE tributes and further explored the aesthetics and politics of Guthrie's legacy on the Grammy-winning *The Ghost of Tom Joad*.

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IN STORES AND
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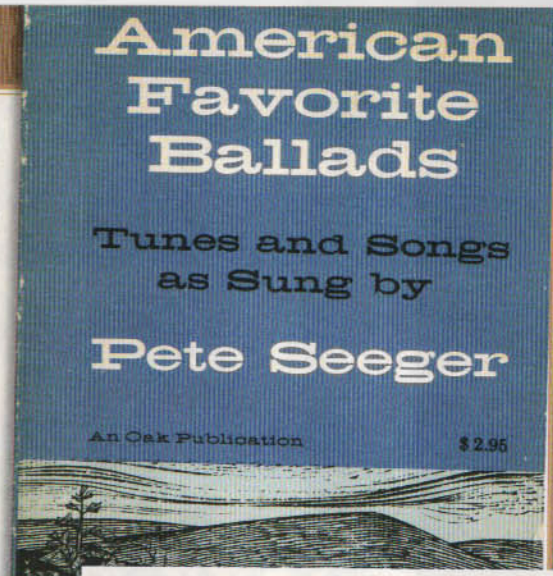
WE SHALL OVERCOME: THE SEEGER SESSIONS

Reviewed by Bryan Garman

More recently, *Devils& Dust* mined American traditions to yield another Grammy, and when Springsteen sang the title track on the nationally televised awards show, he followed his performance with the declaration, "Bring 'em home," a plea to end the war in Iraq. Springsteen's newest offering—*We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*—continues to find meaning at the intersection of folk and politics, where he and the 13 musicians who comprise the studio version of the Seeger Sessions Band examine the connection between past and present; where they resurrect the long-forgotten voices of American bandits, steel drivers, and canal workers; where they celebrate the legacy of the great troubadour, Pete Seeger.

Springsteen, or Seeger for that matter, did not write any of the songs on this collection. So the story is discernible not through the normal medium of Springsteen's lyrics, but through his careful selection and arrangement of the songs. "The whole history of the country is here," said Springsteen in a recent interview with the *New Yorker*. For the most part, these songs come from the 19th century, although some have a sense of timelessness that enables Springsteen to remap a seemingly lost landscape while still navigating the familiar waters of despair, loss and hope. Springsteen masters the idiom of folk music, expanding the limits of the genre with plenty of percussion and emotional intensity, at times pushing it as close to rock 'n' roll as he can without quite uprooting it. Fans who have not appreciated Springsteen's previous forays into folk are not likely to enjoy this one, either—the lyrics are sometimes tin-like to modern ears, and the topics of 19th-century labor songs and African-American spirituals are not particularly hip. The unfaithful might be converted, however, by the expansive energy that drives the album. There are a few slugs here, but *We Shall Overcome* is an imaginative work that is historically rich, politically relevant and aesthetically refreshing, notably when Springsteen and the band unleash some unexpected New Orleans jazz. And even when the characters of these time-worn songs seem destined to give into despair, the deft musicians elicit emotional complexities and nuances that sustain faith in the promised land. The album is indeed a romp through American history—a bumpy, sometimes disturbing, but ultimately rewarding ride.



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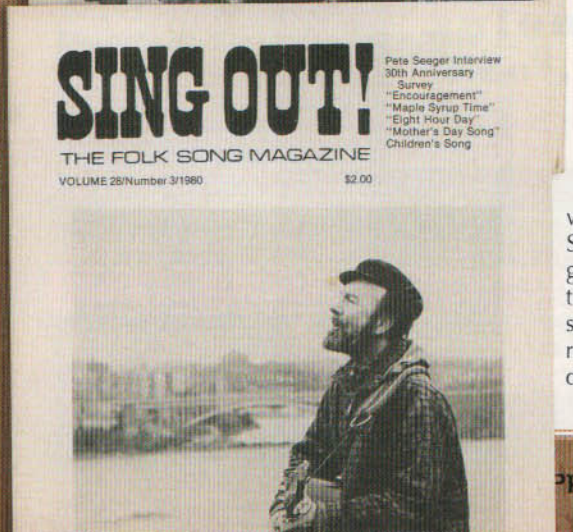
DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

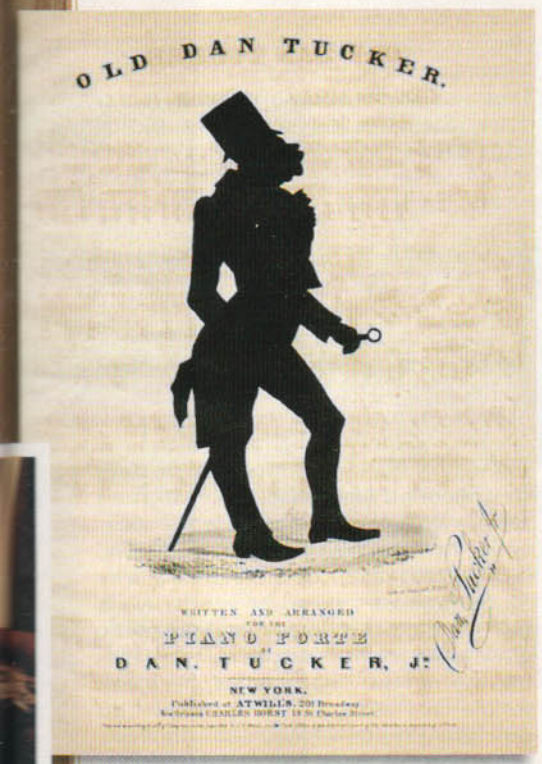


If, following his involvement with the Vote for Change Tour and the Kerry presidential campaign, Springsteen was looking for inspiration in another left-leaning musician, he could not have found a more principled man than Seeger, who has dedicated his life to preserving American folk music and promoting social justice. Seeger's background did not predispose him to becoming a banjo-carrying activist. His father, Charles, however, was a maverick who renounced a background of wealth and privilege to become a college professor with leftist sympathies. Bound by the customs of their class, Charles and Constance de Clyver Edson sent their son to his first boarding school at age four and ultimately saw that he was enrolled at Harvard.

The Cambridge winds proved too chilly for the curious Seeger, who dropped out of university and, through family connections, landed in 1939 at the Library of Congress. There he met Alan Lomax, the folk music scholar who had been recording Woody Guthrie. Seeger became captivated by Guthrie's genius and spirit and traveled with him throughout the country, learning folksongs, talking with displaced workers, rubbing elbows with Communists, and developing a conviction that music could change the world. With Guthrie, Cisco Houston, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, Sis Cunningham and others, Seeger led the American Folksong Movement of the late 1930s and 1940s, performing with the Almanac Singers in support of pro-union politics, condemning Jim Crow laws, and, despite early opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II, ultimately assailing Nazism and fascism.

In 1948, Seeger and other members of a leftist coalition called People Songs supported Progressive Party candidate Henry Wallace's bid for the presidency (Wallace finished fourth behind Truman, Dewey and States Rights Party candidate J. Strom Thurmond). By 1949, Seeger founded The Weavers, a quartet that popularized American folksongs and enjoyed considerable commercial success until Seeger's radical affiliations made him a target of McCarthyism. Forced underground, Seeger spent much of the 1950s performing on college campuses, and in 1955 he was summoned to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, where he refused to speak about his political affiliations. A year-long sentence for contempt was ultimately overturned in 1961, but Seeger remained deeply engaged in progressive causes, including the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements.

In addition, Seeger has contributed immensely to the nation's musical heritage. He has preserved and performed



hundreds of work songs, ballads, blues and spirituals, compiling an impressive catalog of American history. And although he is a diligent and devoted student of the folk tradition, he has never quite seemed at ease in it. As Robert Cantwell has written in *When We Were Good*, his excellent account of the folk revival, Seeger "delivered" his songs "in the honest accents of New England gentility, with its dignified, rotund vowels... the raised voice of a scholar at a podium, lifted out of its element." This manner has in part prevented Seeger from becoming a more popular and prominent part of America's cultural memory. In paying homage to his predecessor, the husky-voiced Springsteen seems determined to rescue Seeger's legacy from this fate. Whether he sings an Irish ballad or an African-American spiritual, Springsteen is comfortable with vernacular, tradition, and more than a few rough edges.

Like *Devils & Dust*, *We Shall Overcome* was released in DualDisc format. Photographs of Springsteen and the musicians appear mostly in timeless sepia, and an introductory essay reveals Springsteen's admiration for Seeger. He also contends that on this album, listeners will not simply hear music being played, they will hear it being *made*. The performances live up to the billing—a quick sampling of the footage of "John Henry" or "Pay Me My Money Down" makes palpable the joy of the musicians, who recorded the three day-long sessions (spread out over eight years) in an old country house. Directed by Thom Zimny, the video captures Springsteen conducting the musicians with the same acumen with which he leads the E Street Band. Brief notes introduce the songs on the lyric sheet, but more historical context is needed; Dave Marsh authored more extensive notes for Springsteen's website—it's too bad they were not included in the album. The DVD contains the now-standard "bonus tracks," in this case "Buffalo Gals" and "How Can I Keep From Singing." The former is a perfectly pleasant rendition, although it would contribute little to the album. The latter draws on the southern Protestant tradition of a cappella sacred harp singing, which holds that all of the saved should use their voices—their sacred harps—to praise God. This hymn would have provided an interesting selection from white religious traditions, but its atonality ultimately banished it from the CD side. Sacred harp is simply not ready for prime time. If only the tired but obligatory "Froggie Went A Courtin'," the song that closes the CD, had met a similar fate.

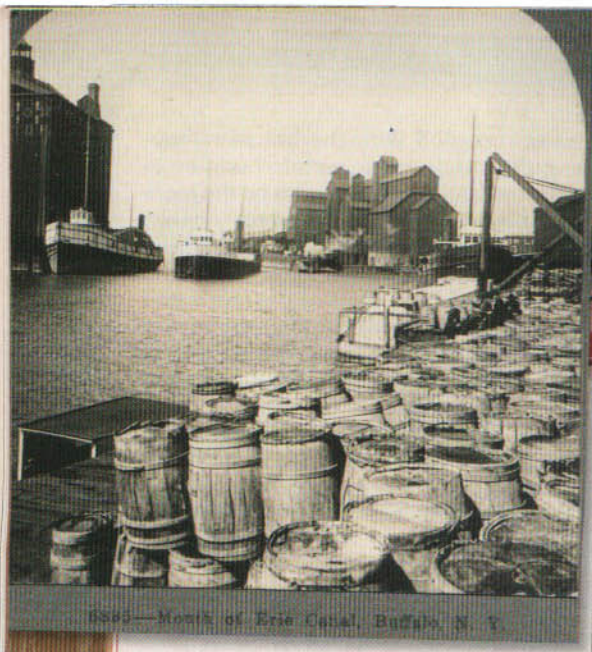
The first three songs from the sessions come from distinct Anglo-American traditions. As Springsteen counts off the opening track, Mark Clifford's banjo, Seeger's signature instrument, and the spoon-like clapping, carry listeners back to an unexpected and complex location: back to old Virginia as it was represented in the blackface minstrel shows of the mid-nineteenth century, in this case through Daniel Emmet's "Old Dan Tucker," one of the most frequently performed songs in the genre. Given the politics of minstrelsy, the selection is a curious one. As early as the 1830s, minstrel shows enjoyed significant popularity among working-class whites, who attended these spectacles for a variety of reasons, not least of which was to furnish themselves with a psychic boost. In the throes of industrialization, their livelihood and sense of independence were being threatened. Fearing that their tenuous economic status would become even more imperiled should blacks be freed, whites blackened their faces to depict African-Americans as inferior, lazy and puerile. Furthermore, such representations, coupled with the act of removing the black mask, enabled whites to assert what they perceived to be the more dignified qualities of their race: manly, independent, intelligent, competent, and worthy of freedom. The Sambos, Zip Coons, and Dan Tuckers that appeared on the minstrel stage produced some of the most pernicious racial stereotypes in our national imagination, stereotypes that remain ingrained in consciousness today. These lyrics from an 1843 version of the song, cited in Eric Lott's *Love and Theft: Black Face Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, are representative of the era:

I come to town de udder night,
I hear de noise den saw de fight,
De watchman was a runnin' roun,
Cryin Old Dan Tucker's come to town,

So get out de way!
Get out de way!
Get out de way! Old Dan Tucker,
Your [sic] too late to come to supper

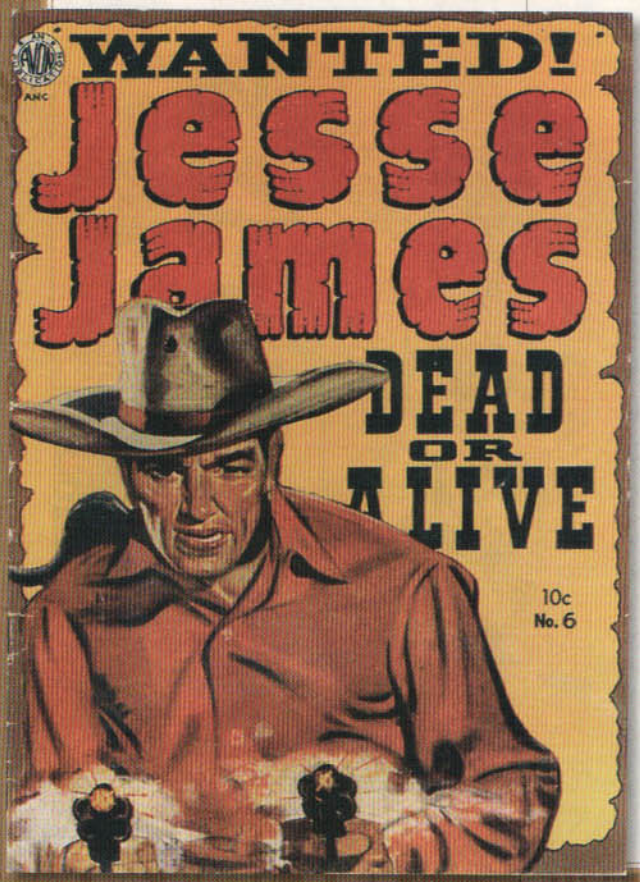
Tucker is a nice old man,
He use'd to ride our darby ram,
He sent him whizzin down the hill,
If he had'nt got up he'd laid dar still.

Tucker on de wood pile—can't count 'lebben,
Put in a fedder bed—him gwine to hebben,
His nose so flat, his face so full,
De top ob his head like a bag ob wool.



Erie—Mouth of Erie Canal, Buffalo, N. Y.

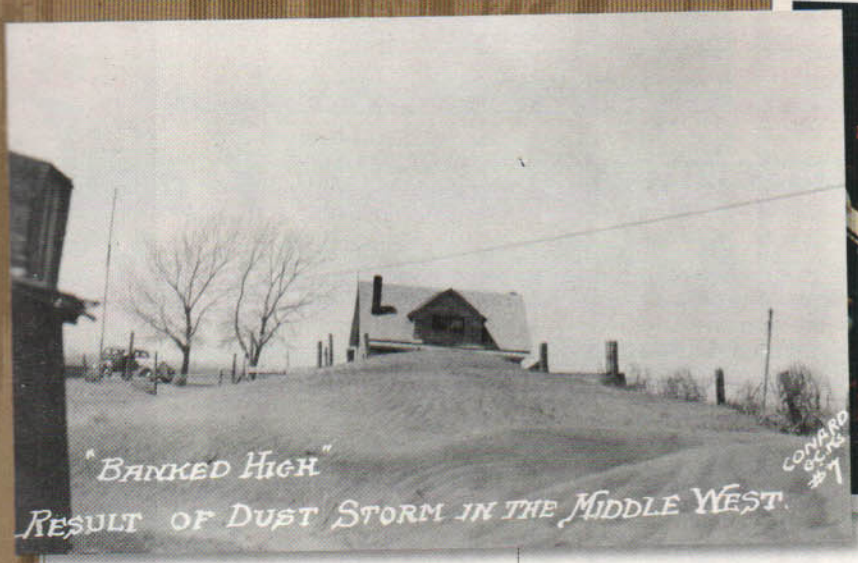
To the audiences that heard this song in its original context, the meaning was unmistakable. Released from the discipline of the plantation, slaves such as Tucker would wreak disorder and destruction, would shake the foundations of civil society. In minstrel lore, African-Americans lacked self-control and intelligence and possessed exaggerated, sometimes animalistic physical features ("head like a bag ob wool") that rendered them inferior to whites. Springsteen, of course, eschews lyrics that caricature appearance or demean intelligence, but the raucous silliness of the song is not far from the 1843 version. Tucker's race is not identified, but he is a childlike presence: he "combed his hair with a wagon wheel/ And died with a toothache in his heel." Why did Springsteen record a song from this troublesome tradition? Perhaps he was unaware of its history, perhaps he found it unimportant. Or perhaps he performs it because in transporting his audience back to the minstrel show, he compels it to reckon with the contradictions and complexities that shape the nation's racial history. The folk tradition is full of hope and resilience, but it is also pocked with shame and ugliness that, in this case, Springsteen carefully dances around. As he sings in "Jacob's Ladder," music has the power to make us "brothers and sisters all," and for the most part the remainder of the album highlights not the differences between, but the common struggles shared by, blacks and whites. Still, more extensive notes would help listeners better understand "Old Dan Tucker."



Among the less inspiring tracks is "Jesse James," a ballad written in 1882 by another minstrel, Billy Gashade. In this song, James, an anti-abolitionist and Confederate veteran, is lionized for his populism ("he stole from the rich and gave to the poor") and his bravery, which is oddly expressed in the line, "he came from a solitary race." In this instance, "race" likely refers to lineage, but given James' background, the word also rings with political overtones peculiar to post-Reconstruction America. Here Springsteen's comfort with the idiom is at its most strained. Despite some good banjo picking and vibrant outbursts from the horns of Richie Rosenberg, Eddie Manion and Mark Pender, the lyrics sound wooden and dated in Springsteen's mouth, and his phrasing is at its most clumsy. But for all of its awkwardness, the song explores the complexities and contradictions of our national heroes. James is loved for being a "bad man," for defying authorities, for adhering to a narrowly construed egalitarian code. He was, at the same time, a thief and a murderer, a man bound in part by the racial imagination of his place and moment. The West was wild but not so innocent.

Innocence is lost, too, in the stirring Irish ballad "Mrs. McGrath," a powerful piece which Marsh dates to at least 1815. The fiddles of Sam Bardfeld and Soozie Tyrell, the piano, and the crashing percussion of Larry Eagle, whose talents have a discernible impact on the album, transport their listeners to the hills of Appalachia or Ireland, delivering one of the most intense, authentic performances on the album. The first verse opens with a captain entreating Mrs. McGrath to send her son, Ted, off to the army. When the son returns from his tour of duty, he does so without his legs, a fact with which his mother struggles to come to terms, alternating between fits of grief and rage. The quiet arrangement of the verses allows for Springsteen's poignant vocals, while his "too-ri-oo-ri-oo-ri-aas" and the music grow more intense, almost enraged, during the refrain. Then comes the break for the final verse: "All foreign wars I do proclaim leave only blood and a mother's pain/I'd rather have my son as he used to be than the king of America and his whole Navy." The musicians underscore the proclamation with the impassioned and emphatic playing that punctuates the song. In referring to the American king, Springsteen's point is clear. He has been an outspoken critic of the Bush presidency and the Iraqi War, and "Mrs. McGrath" reiterates his position. The ballad has much in common with the heart-wrenching, personalized accounts of war's aftermath that Springsteen issues in such songs as "Born in the U.S.A.," "Brothers Under the Bridge," and "Devils & Dust." And it recalls the work of Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a fallen veteran of the Iraqi War, who initiated protests against conflict by picketing Bush's ranch in August, 2005.

The plaintive fiddles of "McGrath" resurface in "Erie Canal," where, led by the banjo, Springsteen's slow telling of the tale instills the narrator with a disturbing sense of loneliness in which he seems to revel. The chorus—"Low bridge, everybody down/ Low bridge, we're coming to a town"—is sung with a sense of wariness, perhaps because the narrator prefers to live a solitary existence, perhaps because he has to gird himself for entering what in the age of the canal (completed in 1825) would be a rough and tumble frontier town. When the horns take a verse on their own, they echo Springsteen's vocals, creating a sense of foreboding. This narrator prefers the towpath to the town and has seen enough to know that he'll never have a pal as good as old Sal, the mule with which he totes the barge. A good mule, apparently, is hard to find.



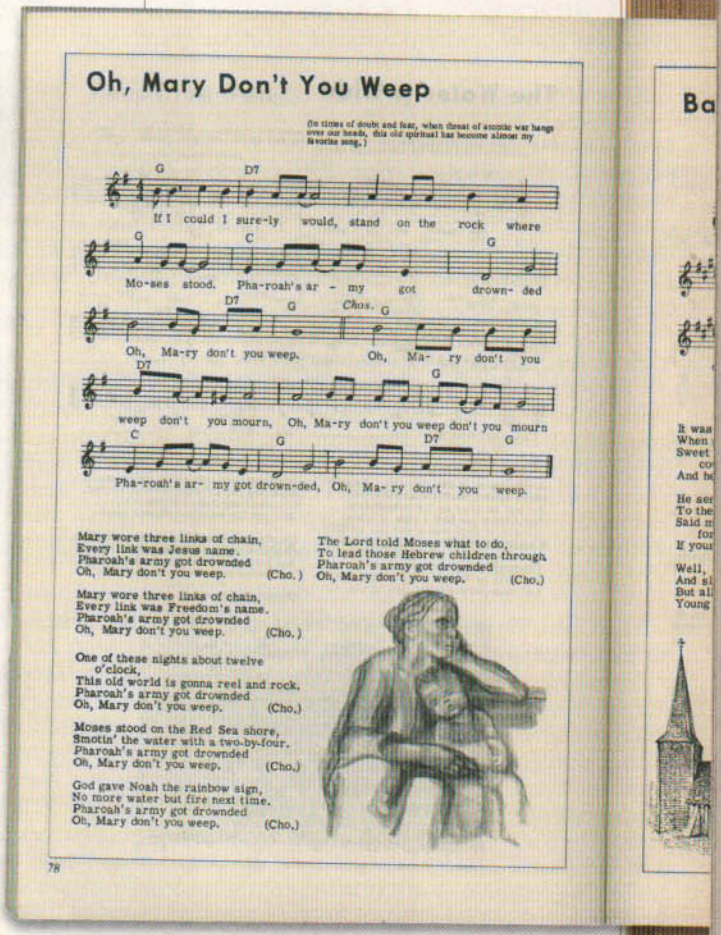
DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

And so is a good home. Moving into the 20th century, "My Oklahoma Home" sends Springsteen heading back down that old dusty road that Guthrie and the Okies traveled, where he laments the loss of his farm and the persistence of his mortgage. The band, buoyed again by Clifford's banjo, is particularly tight, and Springsteen is audibly comfortable, even when he delivers the tragic-comedic lines, "She blowed away, she blowed away/ My Oklahoma woman blowed away/ Mister, as I bent down to kiss her she was picked up by a twister/My Oklahoma girl she blowed away." Taken together, "Erie Canal" and "My Oklahoma Home" remind listeners of hard working, hard living, and hard traveling folks.

The lyrically sparse "Shenandoah" picks up a trail less familiar to Springsteen, that of 19th-century pioneers who cross the Missouri River valley. "Shenandoah" has a mythic, timeless quality to it, evoking misty riversides and foggy mountain tops. The fiddles, banjo, and soaring back-up vocals of Patti Scialfa combine to plumb the depths of sorrow and loneliness but gradually climb out of the abyss to arrive at a place of emotional transcendence. Suffering is transformed into beauty, and by song's end it is as if the weary traveler stands worn but triumphant at the mountain's peak, looking pensively back on the rivers that have been crossed and forward to the possibility and promise represented by a valley below.

Springsteen may be willing to show some warts from Anglo-American traditions, but his selections from the African-American song bag are far more pious. There are no bad men and bandits here, no Stagolee, the man who killed the unlucky soul who stole his Stetson hat, or John Hardy, who killed a man who beat him at cards. Instead, Springsteen rediscovers "John Henry," the oft-recorded classic about an African-American steel driver who proclaims that he will die before being outworked by a steam drill. The arrangement opens with a pair of fiddles scratching, almost dueling out a harmony, before Springsteen counts off and transforms the song into something close to rock 'n' roll. Throughout the performance, which can be seen on the DVD, Springsteen seems barely able to modulate his enthusiasm, allowing a seemingly sacred space for a banjo solo while he drives the legend forward with his guitar, pushing the band as hard as he is able, hammering the folk form from the inside out so that it can hold the depth of his emotion, recreating with his gruff vocals the strength and resolve with which John Henry swung his hammer. Springsteen's characters have been here before. Think, for example, of the lines, "Mister, I ain't a boy, no I'm a man/And I believe in a promised land." "John Henry" is nothing if not an assertion of manhood and faith in the human spirit: "John Henry told his captain,/ "Lord, a man ain't nothing but a man/But before I let that steam drill beat me down/I'm gonna die with that hammer in my hand." Singing with an intensity that rivals that of the legendary bluesman Big Bill Broonzy, who recorded the song with Seeger, Springsteen gives integrity and dignity to an African-American man who had the courage to declare his manhood at a time when his boss would normally have called him by the disparaging term of "boy." In an age of increasing mechanization, he is a man who refused to be dehumanized by a machine. His legend, then and now, is one with which Springsteen can readily identify.

The energy of "John Henry" surges through "Pay Me My Money Down" as well. A condemnation of "the man," "Pay Me" is a protest sung by black stevedores who were often cheated out of their pay by unscrupulous white ship owners. One of Springsteen's ad-libs—"I wish I was Mr. Gates / They'd haul my money in, in crates"—updates this standard for the Windows era. The chorus, which pays tribute to the Weavers' energetic rendition, is exuberant, and the horns are exquisite, but the refrain is likely to grow weary to the ears of even the most loyal folk enthusiasts.



Oh, Mary Don't You Weep

(In times of doubt and fear, when threat of atomic war hangs over our heads, this old spiritual has become almost my favorite song.)

G D7
If I could I sure-ly would, stand on the rock where
G C G
Mo-ses stood. Pha-roah's ar - my got drown- ded
D7 G Chos. G
Oh, Ma-ry don't you weep. Oh, Ma- ry don't you
D7 G
weep don't you mourn, Oh, Ma-ry don't you weep don't you mourn
C G D7 G
Pha-roah's ar- my got drown-ded, Oh, Ma- ry don't you weep.

Mary wore three links of chain,
Every link was Jesus name.
Pharoah's army got drownded
Oh, Mary don't you weep. (Cho.)

Mary wore three links of chain,
Every link was Freedom's name.
Pharoah's army got drownded
Oh, Mary don't you weep. (Cho.)

One of these nights about twelve o'clock,
This old world is gonna reel and rock,
Pharoah's army got drownded
Oh, Mary don't you weep. (Cho.)

Moses stood on the Red Sea shore,
Smotin' the water with a two-by-four,
Pharoah's army got drownded
Oh, Mary don't you weep. (Cho.)

God gave Noah the rainbow sign,
No more water but fire next time.
Pharoah's army got drownded
Oh, Mary don't you weep. (Cho.)

The Lord told Moses what to do,
To lead those Hebrew children through,
Pharoah's army got drownded
Oh, Mary don't you weep. (Cho.)

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SOWING THE SEEDS
A Q&A with Jim Musselman

By Jimmy Guterman

If you like *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, thank Jim Musselman. He's spent most of his career as an attorney and activist, and for the past decade he's been the man behind Appleseed Recordings, which he founded in 1996. In Springsteen circles, the Appleseed label is best-known for *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*, the first of Musselman's three tributes to the work of his friend and colleague Pete Seeger. Of course it was that original collection, released in 1998, that featured Bruce Springsteen's version of "We Shall Overcome," the 1997 performance that provided the spark for his recent album. Without Musselman's record, there's a good chance you wouldn't be singing along with "Pay Me My Money Down" right now.

In my opinion, Pete Seeger has gotten a raw deal in rock 'n' roll circles. Because Seeger has been such a unifier—Arlo Guthrie used to marvel about how he could get thousands of strangers singing in four-part harmony in moments—and he's a master of performing for children, he's often been dismissed by rockers as lightweight and silly. Robbie Robertson has often been quoted that he was wary when he got the call from Bob Dylan in 1965 because he assumed folk music, Dylan's music, was "so white, so clean, so Pete Seeger." As much of a fan as I am of Robertson's work with Dylan and his own Band, he's a million miles off-base here. Seeger is a hero, a man who stared down the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), a man whose own music could be as aggressive as Robertson's—check out the punk-rock banjo on "All Around the Kitchen." Seeger has performed songs that can lull your child to sleep or inspire you to fight for what is right, and in his heyday he often performed at great personal cost. That's not hokey, that's brave, and you can hear it in his music. As Musselman relays, "Steve Earle is working on a one-person play about Pete's life. 'What guts this guy had,' Steve said. 'After going in front of the HUAC, he does a record called *Dangerous Songs!?* People talk about being on the edge. Pete was the ultimate tough guy.'"

How did you come to form Appleseed?

I decided to do it after many discussions with Pete Seeger and Roger McGuinn. It seemed like not a lot of people were being recorded singing traditional American folk songs. I had been a lawyer in Washington, D.C., working with Ralph Nader, and I wanted to tie together the history of folk music with the seeds of social justice and carry it on to the next generation. There were a lot of older artists, people still vital, being ignored by the music industry—people like Roger McGuinn and Donovan, who still had so much to say. I wanted to help them get it out to an audience.

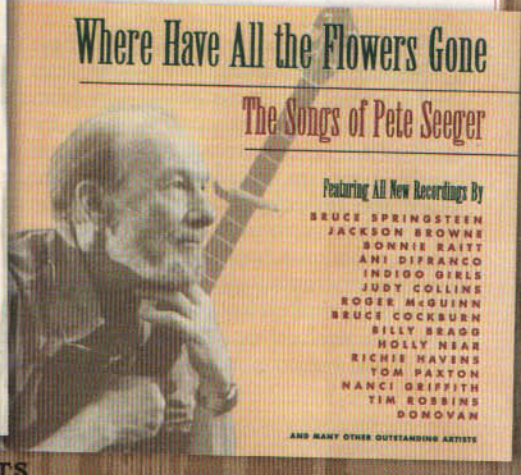
How did you meet Pete Seeger?

I knew him from my work in Washington on environmental issues. We have a friendship going back to 1982. I did a lot of volunteer work with [the folk magazine] *Sing Out!* I was on the board of directors there with Pete. It was a friendship based on politics and music. When I started Appleseed ten years ago, I wanted Pete's songs to go around the world again. I knew because of his age and health that he couldn't do those lengthy world tours any more, but I wanted to help keep those songs going out there. And that was the idea behind *Where Have All the Flowers Gone.*

That double-disc tribute record had 37 recordings. How difficult was it to put together?

It was like trying to get 60 campers on a bus! Some people were talking about just getting 12 top artists to cut 12 of Pete's top songs, but that wouldn't have been accurate or sufficient. I wanted to capture the essence of Pete, the whole thing: political songs, love songs. I was just starting off the label, putting more and more money into it, then I got a commitment from Bob Dylan. Dylan had pledged a cut to me and had actually cut "The Water is Wide." I was told it was done, then I was told he wanted to do some more work on it, then all of a sudden he didn't deliver. I was very, very worried. I had put all my finances into recording, almost $100,000, then the bottom fell out when Dylan got sick and dropped out. [Musselman is referring to Dylan's 1997 life-threatening heart infection.]

Departing from the traditions of ballads and sea chantey protests, Springsteen turns on three occasions to African-American spirituals, which raise the possibility that the individual plights of Jesse James, the canal men, the stevedores, the Okies and perhaps even minstrels such as Emmet might share something in common not only with Henry and all of those who have struggled to make a living, but also with all of those who, like Seeger, have fought for justice. "O Mary Don't You Weep" begins with the fiddles eking out a melody, sounding as if they are being played by a street musicians. Soon the horns amble to their side and unleash a bellow that knocks us back to pre-Katrina Bourbon Street, suggesting that the culture of New Orleans must not be forgotten. Springsteen's voice evokes Blind Willie Johnson, a preacher with a penchant for the blues, who was recorded in the 1920s. The refrain "Pharoah's army got drownded"—a reference to the fate of those who chased Moses and the Israelites but were lost when Moses closed the Red Sea—takes new meaning in the current context, suggesting, perhaps, that the New Orleans flood had a higher purpose, one that might lead to a greater sense of freedom. When taken with Springsteen's intent to perform at the 2006 New Orleans Jazzfest, the brilliant, ebullient arrangements heard here and on "Jacob's Ladder"—arrangements that are not typical in folk song and rarely appear in Springsteen's music—seem to be a paean to the Crescent City, a symbol of its cultural durability, a prayer of hope and a plea for the recognition, as Springsteen sings, that "we are brothers and sisters all."



Musselman (center), with his daughter Justine, and Pete Seeger

In the end, the album, by virtue of its title and of the person it celebrates, is imbued with such communal and activist visions, which are most clearly pronounced in "Eyes on the Prize" and "We Shall Overcome," both anthems of the Civil Rights Movement. Another spiritual, "Eyes" offers a crucial message of hope and includes the essential line, "The only thing we did was right, was the day we started to fight," a call to arms against injustice. The arrangement of the song is at first strained and uncomfortable, with Springsteen's voice sounding uncertain and disconnected from the music. The unusually tentative vocals suggest the elusiveness of the prize and the fears that one might confront when fighting for freedom. But as Springsteen, the background vocalists and the band work through the rousing chorus of "Hold on, hold on/Keep your eyes on the prize/Hold on," their confidence and the possibility of obtaining freedom seem to mount.

"We Shall Overcome" is more inspiring. It seems strange to have a singular voice projected above the crowd in the performance of this mythic piece, but Springsteen's reverent, assured and hopeful vocals, backed with the gospel-like background singers and church-like keyboards, make the arrangement work. There is something powerful about Springsteen, who has earned his stripes as a concerned citizen, principled performer and socially engaged artist, singing a song that Seeger and thousands of other activists have sung. Whether he is playing rock 'n' roll or folk music, Springsteen believes, and encourages us to hope, that we will overcome. Deep in his heart, he believes that, despite a legacy of conflict and pain and hatred, we can walk hand in hand, we can live in peace, we can conquer our fears. He has earned the right to sing this song. On "We Shall Overcome," Seeger meets Springsteen, past meets present, faith and hope meet with an eye toward winning the prize. In light of our present moment, how could Springsteen keep from singing these songs?

How did Springsteen get involved?

I sent Jon Landau a letter in November 1996. Jon replied on December 5 that Bruce was not available. So I went back to Landau in February 1997, and Jon said again that Bruce couldn't do it. Then I went back again, a third time, in April 1997. I was taught persistence, and having Bruce on the record was important for Pete's sake and for history. This time, Jon called me the next day to tell me that Bruce would be happy to participate.

When my daughter turned ten I gave her a list of life lessons, and one was persistence. I showed her Landau's letter to me saying Bruce could not do the Seeger project at first.

I sent a tape of suggested tracks. The problem was that Bruce was coming on board late in the project, and most of the songs were recorded already. I didn't want to bump any artists who had done something already; that wouldn't have been fair. Some of the songs on the tape were "We Shall Overcome," "Jesse James," "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," "If I Had a Hammer," and "Talking Union." "We Shall Overcome" was definitely at the top of the list.

My deadline for the project was August. By then it was clear that Dylan had not come through, and I was terrified. Jon Landau kept assuring me that Bruce was going to do it. He did. Bruce recorded the first week of November 1997. Jon told me that Bruce had done seven songs and was immersed in the project. They sent us three versions of "We Shall Overcome"—just different mixes, not significantly different from one another. When we got them, I called up Pete, who was so touched. I had people telling me to give up the project, but here it was! I grew up a Springsteen fan. I bought *Born to Run* the day it came out. I've always felt he understood all types of music: Gary U.S. Bonds, Otis Redding, Woody Guthrie. I knew that if he went into our project he would enjoy it.

Why did you recommend "We Shall Overcome"?

"We Shall Overcome" is a hard song to tackle. There's a lot of history there. I got some abuse on that: Why would Bruce touch such a song, such a revered civil rights song? Pete has always said that the beauty of a song is it becomes adaptable and changeable. It lives on. I've gotten letters from parents of kids with serious illnesses who have found the song inspirational. They put it on in the morning, or they put it on before they go to the doctor. That took it to another level—personalized it from "we," all of us, to just "the two of us."

After 9/11, NBC News started using [Bruce's version of] "We Shall Overcome." We heard it played on the radio. Neither we nor Bruce wanted to benefit from it. Sony wanted to put out something dealing with 9/11 and wanted to use the track. I asked Bruce to keep Pete's songs together on the Appleseed record. Amazingly, Bruce and his office stood up to Sony. Here he was deciding to support Pete's Appleseed record instead of Sony. Here he was standing up for the little guy. He wanted everyone to hear all of Pete's songs. It blew my mind.

Stepping back to your original record. It comes out and then... seven years pass.

Right! *[Laughs]* During those years, I wanted to bug Jon Landau to let us use one of the other tracks he had recorded in November 1997, but I figured Sony wouldn't let us.

I saw Bruce at the Devon Horse Show in Pennsylvania in 2004. He had come to see his daughter jump. I remember we were talking about some article I had just read in which the writer, a major writer, wrote, "If I hear Pete Seeger sing again, I'm gonna scream." We talked for a while about how Pete is better known for taking the axe to Dylan's electrical cords at Newport in 1965—something that never happened!—than his many achievements. Bruce said, "Maybe there needs to be a reassessment of Pete's work." Little did I know!

So I found out early this year that he had returned to the material. I have been helping out Bruce's office dealing with the song backgrounds and lyrics, copyrights and permissions. I was an activist lawyer, helping put airbags in cars. Never would I have guessed that I'd be helping Bruce Springsteen on an album of folk covers. It's too amazing.

Jimmy Guterman's books include Runaway American Dream. *He hopes his upcoming Clash tribute record (http://sandinista.guterman.com) has a fraction of the impact of Musselman's tributes to Seeger. You can find Appleseed online at www.appleseedrec.com.*

WILL IT GO ROUND

Dave Marsh and Bruce Springsteen talk Seeger Sessions, new rhythms, and "the strange brightness of the twisted American spirit"

IN CIRCLES?

On April 20, in the midst of preparations for that night's Seeger Sessions Band debut on the Asbury Park boardwalk, Bruce Springsteen sat down for a long talk with his old friend Dave Marsh. Good thing for us, Marsh has a radio show. Airing a few days later on Marsh's Kick Out the Jams *program, on Sunday, April 23, the interview found Springsteen speaking expansively about the Seeger Sessions project, taking the listener through its genesis session by session, as well as tracing his folk roots—and his aspirations—back to a circle of strummers on the beach.*

Just before Bruce arrived on the mezzanine of the Paramount Theater for our interview, Thom Zimny, who was going to film it, placed a guitar next to the little round table where the microphones were set up. "Maybe he'll use it, maybe not," he mused.

By the time I sat down across from him, Bruce already held and strummed the guitar, which he continued to do throughout the discussion. Since what we always talk about, when we talk, starts with music, it added immensely to what got said and how. When we got around to "Eyes on the Prize," the radio version became a virtual seminar in how he constructs meaning. It's what he does at the beginning of *Storytellers* with "Devils and Dust," with the difference that the issue was not what the lyrics might mean but the way that performing a song determines meaning.

The Seeger Sessions provides the best opportunity in many years for Bruce to talk about such things, because music is what it's about, from the time he crashes into "Old Dan Tucker" to the last line, when he declares "If you want anymore, you can sing it yourself," an act of encouragement 180 degrees from the silence he's commanded for his other "folk" projects. For someone like me, who values a truly original performance even more highly than an original song, that spirit places *Seeger Sessions* in the top rank of what he's accomplished.

I'd first heard what was already being called "the Seeger project" in late December 2005 and immediately fell for its energy, the swinging drumming, the relaxed way in which he and the group delved into frenzy. Bruce and I had a couple of talks about it before the album came out, which sort of grew into the "liner notes" on his website. I remember telling him about Sis Cunningham, who wrote "My Oklahoma Home," after he said he was sure that Woody Guthrie had written it. (I can imagine someone in another half-century insisting that Bruce did. I sort of came to the conclusion that it's all true.)

That, the research for the notes, and seeing an early rehearsal (about a week before the public ones) constituted my preparation. Well, if you don't count being immersed in some of these songs since I was a teenager. Bruce's circle on the beach had very broad boundaries, and somewhere even further on the fringe, they made room for me, too.

Once we started, we had an hour (the raw tape is 64 minutes). We stayed focused on music, and all the other topics flowed from that. The guitar and the freer state of mind Bruce seems to have been in since the *Devils & Dust* tour took off into the deepest realms of his song catalogue made this the easiest interview of the many we've done since the first one, 32 years ago. I came away from it thinking that I knew something new about my old friend and where he came from. I learned a long time ago that you can never figure out where he's going next. —*Dave Marsh*

Well, Bruce, first of all I would like to congratulate you on once again confounding everyone else's expectations.

[Laughs] Including my own, I think.

Well, I have never seen you excited in quite the way you are by this music right now.

It's fun—it's just exciting stuff to play, and the band is exciting. It's an exciting group of musicians, and also it's very freeing in the sense that the nature of the music, and not having to write it, kind of opened me up to be just purely musical.

Kinda like the way you can brag on something if it isn't yours?

[Laughs] So it opened the whole thing up to just this purely musical experience. A lot of the rhythms that were used—the only rule I had was if it was something I did with the guys, with the E Street Band... whatever this is, it has to be *not that.*

You're talking about stuff that's not on the record, but for your show.

Yeah, for the show—straight down the line, really, from the record to the show, just the different rhythms. The main thing, my only sort of line, was that everything felt rhythmically different. And we were drawing directly from a different—there's some crossover, but mainly from a lot of different influences.

Actually, the first note I have here is "beats." And that they're rowdy and participatory beats.

Yeah, it's interesting—there are bluegrass grooves, there's country grooves, there's gospel grooves, there's a lot of New Orleans in it.

And swamps further back than New Orleans, too.

Yeah... we have a version of "My Father's Place" that's very *field chant.* And it just goes a lot of places I haven't really gone before.

It's your most syncopated recording ever.

Yeah, and that really came from the different rhythms [of] the music that I chose, but then also came from the musicians themselves. There's a spot in "Pay Me My Money Down" when you can hear the band—there was a series of steps that we took that happened very naturally. When I first went in, it was obviously just to find a song for Pete's record [Appleseed Recordings' 1998 tribute, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone: The Songs of Pete Seeger].* And so I listened to a lot of his music and picked out a bunch of things that I thought I could sing and would sound right interpreting.

This was way back in '97.

This was in '97. I think the first thing we played was Jesse James. *[Plays and sings:] Jesse James was a lad / That killed many a man / He robbed the Glendale train...* So that [sound is] already something—I don't play that with the E Street Band. That's a very different feeling. So it started there. And these guys, who I had met at my farm, through Soozie Tyrell, came down from the city; they were playing sort of a zydeco and Cajun feeling, it just clicked. I think, literally, the take on the record is the second thing we ever played together—the second take. So just

right from the beginning, just *bang*, it was it fired up right from the start. So it started there, just with a little bluegrass [feel], and then... I'm trying to think what else we cut that day, the initial day that we recorded. You might know better than me...

I actually don't.

No? Okay, the things we cut from the first session were "Jesse James," "My Oklahoma Home"...

"Oklahoma Home," which is the least-recorded song, one of the newest songs...

That's interesting, I didn't know that.

There are only two other versions recorded: Sis Cunningham, who wrote it, and Pete.

That shocks me. I didn't know that at all.

It hadn't been recorded in 40 years!

Strange. Because it's such a fabulous story, and the guy tells such a tragic story with so much wit, and strength, and humor, and the verses are just—

Well, when they get to that Smokey Robinson internal rhyme, with "mister" and "kissed her"...

[Laughs] [Plays and sings:] Got picked up by a twister.... And I guess what caught me was the chorus, it's got that great *[sings:] blowed away (blowed away!), she's blowed away (blowed away!),* I said yeah, that'll be fun to sing! So we cut that the first day, and that turned into almost a—we sort of combined a little of the bluegrass rhythm with some Texas swing. So all of a sudden, we started out with that beat, and then some Texas swing kind of slipped in.

A little Bob Wills—because you've got the horn section in there...

Bob Wills, right. And the bizarre thing, I don't know why I did it, was why I had the horns come at all! I got a letter from Pete, and Pete said, "Wow, horns on 'Jesse James'! Who would have thunk?" *[Laughs]* And I knew what he was talking about, because I don't know why I had the horn section come. And really, for the first session it was only Richie "La Bamba" [Rosenberg] and Eddie Manion, so we had just a trombone and a saxophone, because I think Mark [Pender] was doing something. But I must have heard something, some of the '20s influence coming from somewhere, because I had the guys come down. I had no idea what to tell them to play, so I didn't tell them to play anything. I put them in the hall, and I said, "just sort of play along," y'know? *[Laughs]* And I think it was at the end of "Jesse James," where Richie starts to move into that Dixieland solo on the trombone. It's player's music, also: it's music where there's a lot of soloing.

A different kind of soloing than you'd get in a rock band

Yeah—literally, it's *jamming*, you know? *[Laughs]* So there's a lot of soloing, and at some point I said, "Well, the fiddle played, the accordion played... all right, Richie!" And Richie went into that Dixieland feeling, and so that entered into the picture. I think that same day we covered "Stand at Every Door," which we had a nice version of but didn't end up on the record. We also cut "Pretty Boy Floyd" and "We Shall Overcome."

Six-part harmony: parlor singing in the Crescent City.

RUTH BARONN PHOTO

And the one track that comes out, of course, is "We Shall Overcome." You would not have guessed that all those people were there, because that really just feels like you and Patti [Scialfa]. I don't know who else is on it.

That was just a step up from people sitting in their living rooms singing. When we approached the background vocals, we approached it like that. There was very little rehearsing of the voices, and Patti's worked incredibly hard—there's a lot of singing in the show, just an enormous amount of singing, and she really arranged and put all the singers and the chorus together that we have. But at the initial session, I wanted to keep it very, very much like parlor singing, very loose and unstructured. So basically we got parts very quick, and we rushed through everything, and that was the sound that I liked. We played the track, and then everybody came in and sang it. Patti's voice is very prominent, as it is on a lot of the things on the record—"Shenandoah," she's got that beautiful "high country" sound.

And as people get to the bonus side, on "How Can I Keep From Singing"—which actually, to tell you the truth, I was thinking gee, maybe this belonged on a Patti solo record! Because she owns that.

Yeah, and she just did a beautiful job. So it was exciting, because when you can get a lot of people singing together, that choral sound of human voices is always something. It always ends up very personal, very human. There's all kinds of choral music… there was a lot of different kinds of singing on there: "Shenandoah," and "We Shall Overcome," and then obviously the stuff that veers closer towards gospel singing, like "Jacob's Ladder." But that came third session—we're still on the first session! The first session, we're running through those, and... We need a songlist. Can somebody dig up a list of songs from the album?

There's an album here...

You got an album? Let's look at it, because it'll jog my memory. All right: "Old Dan Tucker," first session.

So the first thing you're hearing on the album is something from the first session.

The first thing we did was "Jesse James"; "Old Dan Tucker was one of the first things.

Well let's talk about that for a minute, because those two songs—"Jesse James" is a song that people associate with Woody Guthrie, because he rewrote it. And "Old Dan Tucker" is actually written by Bob Dylan a hundred years before Bob Dylan was born, right? *[Laughs]*

That's really strange.... the surrealism and the lyrics are so modern.

"Washed his face in a frying pan," "died of a toothache in his heel..."

[Starts to play] The surrealism. The only thing we could use is if anybody has the lyrics, which I assume are in this…

Yeah, they probably are, but we'd need a magnifying glass.

I don't know, my eyes still might be—*might* be, and I say *might*...

Might be good enough for the task? I have bifocal contact lenses, so I get away with it sometimes.

I'll tell you in a minute. *[Long pause]* I can't read 'em. *[Both laugh]* My apologies to my fans with fading eyesight. *[Laughs]*

There's a few of us out here.

But yeah, the surrealism in the lyrics is just fabulous.

You know what I need? If somebody could get me—is Terry here? My bag, I actually have glasses in there. Shh! Edit that part out! *[Laughs]* Yeah, there's a bag somewhere that's got 'em.

Anyway, we end up with "Froggie Went a Courtin'," which is surreal in another way.

Yeah, and I read your essay about it—I want to hear all those verses! That was the only version I knew, and you said there was like a hundred... I want to see all the verses. We may add them as we go along.

May the tour last that long! *[Both laugh]* Well, you've got to do "Here's to Cheshire, here's to cheese" once, that's one of Pete's great little moments. Now, Pete Seeger did three different "Froggies." I don't know if you heard all three of them.

I don't think so, no.

So you heard one or two, but you didn't—and now we're moving toward the second and third sessions—you didn't restrict yourself to the versions that Pete did. You went and did some—you had Terry Magovern, your assistant, and you guys sort of did some research, right? Picked and chose? In a proper folkloric manner?

No, not really. I'm trying to think if I might have tried to dig up some extra lyrics on some things, but for the most part... no, I didn't hear a lot of other versions of that.

No? I thought we talked about that earlier. But the thing you did do, to really change several songs, is you changed keys.

The changes I made, a lot of it was musical. I changed "O Mary," which is generally done in a major key, I just heard it in a minor key for some reason. It made it darker, and it sort of brought out its apocalyptic side. There were a lot of things I did like that. I don't really remember the musical changes I made now, but I was throwing in chords and just trying to fit things to how I heard them, resetting lyrics.

"O Mary" is generally done in a major key, I just heard it in a minor key for some reason. It made it darker, brought out its apocalyptic side.

Okay, we've got a session in '97, you don't do another session until 2005. In between, what's happening to this stuff?

It's just sitting around, like a lot of my things do! *[Laughs]* And I'm off doing other things. After I did the session, I was really excited about it, and I got really excited about it over the next seven years, probably four or five times. But there was always something else coming up. I had it there, and I'd go back to it, say, "Let me hear that stuff we cut at the house...." Toby [Scott] would send me over the tape, and all I knew was that I enjoyed listening to it a lot. It was so listenable.

Especially because your last three records have been tragedies.

Yeah... I mean I hadn't thought of it in that way, but they were pretty dark.... and the main difference is just whether you're writing, or just singing and playing. I find that when I'm writing, I'm on my way to try to find a setting for the lyrics. And if I'm writing for the [E Street] Band, I'm trying to find a setting for the lyrics that fits with a lot of what we do in the band. If I'm writing my narratives and short story kinds of songs I write, I think like that a little bit more, and the music tends to be—certainly in the narrative things, I use very basic and very simple [music], because the lyrics are so dense. So I think what you get with this particular music is, when all this music was written, the sense of struggle is in it, but there's also the strange brightness of the twisted American spirit that keeps pushing its way through.

Well, how "John Henry" becomes an uplifting song...

The music is just vital—it's simply vital. That's what pours out. And you hear it—you know, there's the most beautiful music that comes out of Africa. The struggle songs are all—you know, the bubbling rhythms, *bubbling* rhythms, dance music, dance rhythms, things that are so transcendent. Bob Marley: incredible lyrics of struggle, and yet dance rhythms, and bright. That's a powerful combination, when those things come together. And so, in a funny way on a lot of these songs, you get a similar kind of experience.

Even "Mrs. McGrath," which is very downtempo, yet...

It's got that big chorus. *[Plays and sings:] Too-ri-aa, fol-did-dle-di-aa…* It's the sound of determination.

It's interesting, because that's the only song on the record that's really, truly what you'd think of as a topical or protest song. It's the only song that addresses an issue. Even "We Shall Overcome" and "Eyes on the Prize"—"Eyes on the Prize" says "the day I started to fight," and that's a freedom song addition, but for the most part, this is a record that is in another world than that.

Once again, I think you're choosing things that you think you can make "of the moment," and so you're connected to this present world. I didn't choose anything as a historical piece.

Well, you're not approaching this as historical music, because nobody *would* put a brass band on "O Mary Don't You Weep." It's been done 200 times; nobody ever did it that way.

It was: how do I make this very, very present? How do I make these characters leap off the record and make them sit, or dance, or sing in your living room? Right now. That's the key—you have to make it very, very present. I didn't have a lot of interest in the music as a historian. That's sort of somebody else's job, you know?

Yeah, me! *[Both laugh]*

And so my main thing was, what's gonna be exciting to play, and fun to sing and to hear people cut loose on, you know? That was my main criteria. The stuff that passed the bar, that was the stuff we used. So that was my approach to the whole thing. Pete wrote me a letter about the history of a lot of the songs and talked to me on the phone about it once I told him what I was up to, and then you researched the stuff quite a bit, and that's where most of my information about the music is from.

If you'd known more, you wouldn't have done what you did. I don't think you would have felt free to do what you did, if you'd gone and done that kind of research.

Basically, like I say, I was just looking for what stories enthrall me right now, and what do I think I can bring to life right now and do something with—and what can I add my two cents on as an interpreter. Which is something that I've done only very rarely in the past, because I never saw myself primarily as an interpreter of other people's music or of other songs.

But these aren't other people's songs, because they're *everybody's* songs. Most of them.

Yeah, and I think the idea that these are songs, many of them, that have been roundly sung, and passed around, and handed down, I found some element of... there was a lack of self-consciousness. This is there to go to, and that was very freeing.

And at the same time now, if you look back on it (because I know you do that periodically when we make you), it *does* fit in with your other stuff. The themes...

Oh yeah. It all fits with the story that we've been telling for a long time, and it's just another stop along the way, really. I think if you followed my music, bottom line, "Dan Tucker" could have come off *Greetings From Asbury Park*, you know? *[Laughs]*

And "My Oklahoma Home" could have come off any record from *Born in the U.S.A.* to *Devils & Dust*.

And now I have my glasses... *[Plays and sings first verse of "Old Dan Tucker."]* So that's like off of *Highway 61*, or...

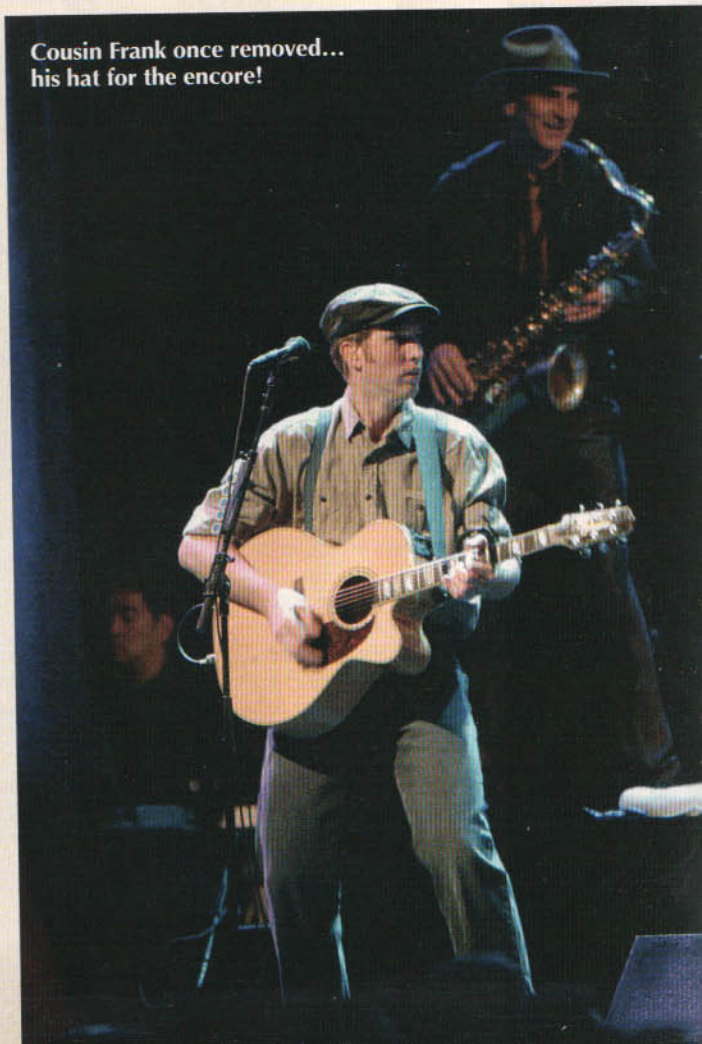
Oh yeah! And sort of bleeding into your first two albums. "Mrs. McGrath" could have been on *The Wild, the Innocent & the E Street Shuffle* pretty easily. The other thing is that part of that story you've been telling all this time is about a kind of participation that sometimes hasn't been readily available, or it hasn't been real obvious how people could participate. And on this one it's really obvious—I mean, some of these are sing-alongs.

Oh, I think probably most of them. Most of them are. Like I've said, it's tavern music, it's living room music, and the collectiveness of it is part of its essence.

In the documentary that comes with the album, one of the things you talk about [is] your cousin, Frank Jr., and his dad, your cousin Frank, how this is one of the places where your guitar playing first came in. You never told this story before, so I was dumbfounded.

Frank—who is playing in this band, Frank Jr.—is my cousin, and his dad is a few years older than me. I remember when I was probably around...when I was 14 he must have been like 16 or 17, and you know how it is when there's somebody a few years older in the family.... And Frankie played the accordion, in the classic sort of Ted Mack *Amateur Hour* style. I'd go over to his house all the time, and he'd bust out the big box, and he'd play the accordion. Well, one day I go over, these were family functions, and he's playing the guitar. Had to be around '64, I guess, and he had an acoustic guitar, and he was playing a lot of folk songs.

This was the height of the folk boom, '63 and '64, and *Hootenanny* was on television. And you'd go to the beach on Sunday, and one of the things that used to inspire me was there was about 20 guys that used to meet at the beach on Sunday, and they would sit in this big circle on a Sunday afternoon. And they would draw 100 people around them, playing "Twist and Shout," and folk music, you know, "If I Had a Hammer." And this would go on all afternoon at the beach—for hours, three or four hours, they'd all.... I said, *man*, if I could just get a guitar, I'd love to just find my place in the sand, and...



Cousin Frank once removed... his hat for the encore!

TONY NELSON PHOTO

In the circle.
That's it—I just wanted to find my place...

This is exactly the same thing we talked about when we talked about *Born to Run*.
Yeah, I wanted to find my place in that circle of guys. And you know, they were just kind of strummers and shouters, but hey, the girls in the bikinis were there, standing all around. So I said *[laughs]*, man, I just want to find my place, you know, I just want to learn a few chords and squeak in there on a Sunday afternoon, sit in the back and strum along.

And so, Frank had started to play the guitar. And I remember I went over one night, and I was enthralled. I had gotten a guitar, but I had not learned how to tune it or how to read any chord charts. Basically, I brought it home, it was all out of tune, and I was making up songs, just plunking away on what I had. I don't know if I brought it with me or what, but he taught me how to tune the guitar, and then he had a folk songbook with the chord charts in it, and he said, "Look, see where these black dots are? That's where you put your fingers. You put your fingers on those spots *[laughs]*, and you're on your way!"

I remember I went home that night—he gave me the book, I went home that night, and it was "Greensleeves" or something, and I saw it was E minor, because it only takes two fingers. *[Laughs]* So I said, "I'll start there!" And E minor was my first big success. And the interesting thing was, see, I started off in a minor key, and that led me down that road ever since.

So his son picked up a guitar quite a few years back and wrote some songs and has made some music, and so I said, gee, you know, I wonder what Frank is doing? So I said, let me call Frank, and I had Frank come in. Because the idea was, yeah, it's sort of this family thing: everybody sits around and sings. And so I said, "Frank, come on up and play!" And so he came up, and he plays well, and he covers all my guitar parts when I'm simply *hamming*. It gives me a lot of hamming room, because someone else will actually be playing while I'm clowning.

I said, man, if I could just get a guitar, I'd love to find my place in the sand... my place in that circle... learn a few chords and squeak in there on a Sunday afternoon, sit in the back and strum along.

That guy Steve used to do that.
Yes! Yes. *[Laughs]* So that was the actual, initial thing that got me down the road to learning actually how to play. *[Strums:]* E minor, A minor, those are the first two; they're close to each other. And I never made it to that circle on the beach. I don't know what happened.

I think the circle dispersed—and joined rock bands and played at night.
That's what happened! By '65, when I was ready, it was over. I think I spent about the first six months—I did work on some folk things, and then immediately, you know: *[plays "Twist and Shout" intro]* I immediately picked up "Twist and Shout." "Twist and Shout" was the first thing I learned. And I tried to move along to some Beatles songs, and Stones songs and things.

So yeah, it's nice having Frank up there with us.

And actually, the other person who's sort of renewed with your crew here is Patti. Because you've got not only Soozie, who was on the *Rising* tour, but you've got Lisa Lowell, and they were sort of a busking trio on the streets on New York at one point.
The interesting thing about the group is that it's kind of half people who've played together for a really long time, informally, and half people that just kind of happened by the house one day. *[Laughs]*

And then people that I've met in sort of other unusual... like, once I put the horn section on, the only thing we overdubbed on a few tunes was the tuba. Because, man, I have a *brass band* going, and part of the sound of that particular brass sound, on some of these things I need the tuba.

It's the humor, and the drama.
It's the humor—and so I met this fellow Art [Baron], from the City, and also I went up and saw the *Nebraska* [Project]...

That's right, the [New York] Guitar Festival did a tribute to *Nebraska*.
And I went up and I met Marc [Anthony Thompson], the guitarist, who played "Johnny 99" that night. I'd seen him on television with Marc Ribot. [Thompson] records as Chocolate Genius and, by the way, has made two fabulous records—I think one is *Godmusic* and one is *Black Music*—you should rush out and get those, they're really beautiful records. And so we kind of met

The core horn section for the album and tour, L-R: Ed Manion, Mark Pender, Richie "La Bamba" Rosenberg, Art Baron

GUY ACETO PHOTO

And on the fourth day, they rested. The album cover, unabridged. Clockwise from top left: Jeremy Chatzky, Soozie Tyrell, Ed Manion, Larry Eagle, Frank Bruno, Mark Clifford, Mark Pender, Lisa Lowell, Sam Bardfeld, Richie "La Bamba" Rosenberg, Patti Scialfa, Bruce Springsteen, Charles Giordano.

there, and I forgot about it, but Art the tuba player said "Hey, you know, I know this guy Marc..." and I said "Oh yeah, we've met." And he said he'd be interested in doing some singing, doing some background singing. I said "Well, great, come on down!" And he came down, and it was like, *bang!*, it was just perfect right away. And so the whole thing is just a happy accident. It was the nicest way for music to get made—completely unplanned.

But Patti and Lisa and Soozie sang together, busking in New York City, when they were in their late teens and early '20s, so they've sung and played together for a *really* long time.

I'm glad you didn't put a number to it *[both laugh]*—save us both a lot of grief!

So it's nice to have the three of them together. And the horn section, obviously, with Southside from 1975.

And your bass player, your drummer, and Sam Bardfeld, the one fiddle player, those guys play together all the time. So it's interlocking circles.

Yeah, exactly. It's a circle that slips over the edge of another circle, that slips over the edge of another circle... and it really, I believe, has something to do with why they play so well together. Because it's all a bunch of people who've played really well together for a really long time, slipping one over another. The horn guys have played together, so I can just say, "I want something that feels like this." "I want these kinds of harmonies."

And everything that's on the record happened while the music was being played; I may have sung a little riff or something.

And then you've got Cindy Mizell and Curtis King. And they sing together in the studio all the time, don't they?

Yeah. It's interesting because it wasn't a group of disparate musicians who then had to learn how to play together. It's people who knew how to play together when they walked into my house. And the shocking thing was, I didn't know anything about them other than I liked how they sounded playing at my bash.

Well, they were probably playing outdoors, right?

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

Yeah, it was just an old squeaky sound system. So the guys came 'round, and the level of musicianship once we started—of course, Charlie Giordano, incredible accordionist and keyboard player—once we got into it, things really started to happen.

And the other thing was, they were experienced musicians; they understood the whole art of listening while the music is being played. And that's why I said, in the record, that people get a chance to hear music being made as it's happening, as it's occurring. Everything you're hearing on the record is something—it is probably the *livest* live record I've ever made. It had the things that I've done with the E Street Band that are similar, like "Born in the U.S.A." The same things: there's a riff, there's a count-off, and it's the second take, and that's it—it's done.

That's pretty much the way the guys describe it. And that's why it feels like, I think, like it's in continuity with your other records, because the energy level is up there.

And as we went session to session, things started to change and happen. By the time we got to the second session....

Well, had you been in touch with those guys in that whole intervening period?

No. *[Laughs]* So we played, and like seven years went by, and I don't know, maybe they played at my house again a few times, I'm not sure! *[Laughs]* But for the most part, not really. And so 2005 comes along, and after one of my listenings, I said gee, that was a lot of fun, I think I'll do another session of that. Because if I do another session, I'll have enough for an actual album. And I don't know if I'll ever put it out or what I'll do with it, but I'll have enough songs. And so the second session comes along—and where's our cover here?—and I think we did "Mrs. McGrath," "John Henry," "Erie Canal," "Shenandoah," "Pay Me My Money Down," maybe "Froggie." A lot of things came out of that second session.

So for that second session, were you going back to Pete records? Where were you going for material that time?

At some point, I said I'm going to do this drawing off of Pete's records, because I've said in a few interviews that as far

as a library of music and just the sheer archival size of it, it's unmatched. I don't know any other single performer who has put his hands on so many disparate kinds of music.

People think of Pete as this "folk singer," but they have no idea what that means, musically.

Yeah, and so everything that happens on our record is implied in something that Pete was doing. The band, there's a great banjo player, there's a great 12-string player—they're all things that I heard after hearing those records and hearing the things that those musicians brought.

So that was a big session. Once again, the session would last an afternoon, and then we would sing in the early evening. So the record was cut in two-and-a-half days—shortest record I ever made. That was a big session, because I started to move away from *[strums "Jesse James" opening riff].* That's where I started, and "We Shall Overcome." And I said well, geez, there's a lot of other—*[plays "Erie Canal" riff]* "Erie Canal," that minor thing, it feels very '20s or '30s to me. There's a lot of ragtime elements in it, you know? And early jazz elements.

Now, there's a case where—I've got the horns on "Erie Canal," and they're playing in sort of that very "brass band" style, and so okay, the solo is coming up, and I'm going, well, our horns... you may even hear me say it on the record, because if you listen to the record, there's a lot of me going: "Horns!' "Intro!" "Sam!" You know, I'm yelling out people's names, and calling solos.

That feels appropriate to the genre somehow. I mean, that's how it happens.

Yeah, that's actually how it's supposed to be played. *[Laughs]* So the horns come along, and all of a sudden, *bang,* they burst into that Dixieland thing, New Orleans/Dixieland, which is the first time it actually occurs during the sessions. So we've got the trumpet, we've got the three-piece horn section, and people are really playing. And I'm going, *wow,* that sounded really great. And so now, all of a sudden, we've moved into some other... we've pulled in this other genre that feels like it's fitting very naturally, and it happened on the spot.

So when we came back for the following session and we're doing "Eyes on the Prize," now I've got in my mind: okay, well, this is gospel, and jazz, and we're getting the church, and we're getting sort of the gutter, and that's the kind of ground I want the music to cover. So on "Jacob's Ladder," the gospel thing bursts into that real dirty horn, and same thing with "Eyes on the Prize." So once again, as we played together more, things just started to happen.

And the New Orleans thing, you can hear it happen on "Pay Me My Money Down." *[Plays and sings:] I thought I heard the captain say / Pay me my money down / Tomorrow...* That's your basic folk rhythm. The song starts, and that's what I'm thinking—that's where the thing is sitting. But then Larry comes in on the drums, and somewhere, I don't know exactly what verse it happens, but it starts to pick up that "jump" *[demonstrates rhythm]* that's sort of zydeco and Cajun. That starts to happen, and all of a sudden we've gone there. And I don't know if it's a quarter of the way through the song or halfway through, but you can feel it. You can feel the rhythm shift slightly, and all of a sudden we're there. Now we're someplace else—we've gone to some other part of the country.

You can feel it. You can feel the rhythm shift slightly, and all of a sudden we're there. Now we're someplace else – we've gone to some other part of the country.

The process is fascinating, because that song, which began in the Sea Islands off Georgia, ends up being done quite often by West Indians in sort of the Calypso rhythm that you were just doing.

Really? So you know, that was something that these guys just—it was there, and it had to come out! So all of a sudden I'm hearing that, and Charlie's got the accordion going, and they play that stuff real, real well. When they came down and played for us, that's the kind of grooves and feels they were playing. And so now we're there, and now we have this whole other place to go, you know?

Yeah, you sort of moved your music from the one to the two and the four.

It just moves, so we're kind of taking a trip around the country itself, geographically, as the sessions are going along. We're visiting different places: Appalachian places, and we're moving down south....

One of the things about your singing on this record, and "Pay Me My Money Down" is one of the places, is you sound more New Jersey than ever. I noticed this on the last tour...

[Laughs] I'm not sure that's something I'm aspiring to! But go ahead.

Well, no *[laughs],* it was a little bit on the last tour I noticed it, too. There's a very distinct accent in central and southern New Jersey.

And see, not being in central and southern New Jersey, I do not know what that might be!

But being married to somebody whose whole family is from Trenton, I hear it.

I know there's a *north* Jersey accent...

Nope, this is different. Yours is more... it's almost Elizabethan in some strange way. It's nasal...

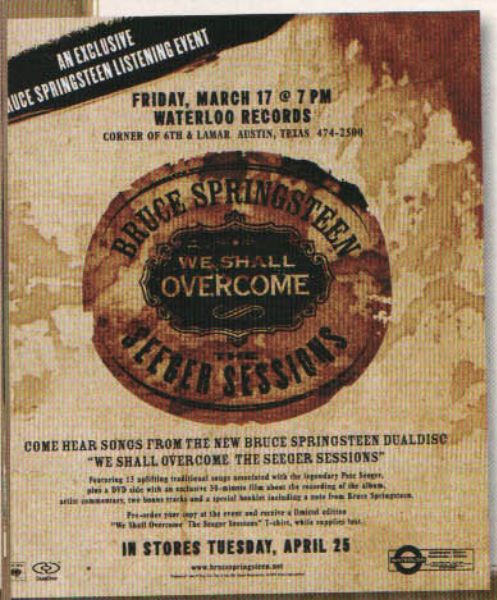
Nasal, that I got covered! *[Both laugh]* That's one of my specialties!

But I hear it, anyway. We'll see if anybody else does.

I don't know, I mean, your voice shifts in response to the music you're playing and singing instinctively, and the only thing I knew when I went in to sing on these things is, well, I'm going to sing a way I haven't sung before, I thought. Which I thought is what I was doing! *[Laughs]*

Well, it may be as simple as that—that you just felt comfortable with other intonations.

And I'm singing from a different place in my throat. If you go from, say, the early music—*Born to Run* is a lot of chest. And as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"WE SHALL OVERCOME THE SEEGER SESSIONS"
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DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

I've gone along over the years, I've found a falsetto, and I also move my voice up very often into a somewhat higher place. And then on this particular music I think I might have moved it up even higher into my throat. I was looking for something that was frayed, really just ragged around the edges. Because that's what all these characters are.

On stuff like—very different tracks, but "Old Dan Tucker" and "My Oklahoma Home," that kind of thing?

Even "Eyes on the Prize." I found I wanted to sing it... they didn't want to be *sung out,* and I don't know why, but the way I approached the freedom songs particularly was: it's surreptitious. There are secrets being told at the beginning of all those songs. And so the idea was, yeah, I'm gonna start out, there's a secret being told. That you're not supposed to know about, really. But that you *need* to know about. You *need* to know about.

And so the singer starts off, well, he's whispering. *[Plays and sings:] Paul and Silas bound in jailed / Had no money to go their bail / Keep your eyes on the prize / Hold on.* So this guy, he's in the shadows. You're walking down the street, and you're thinking everything is fine, and it's not too early in the evening but not too late, either, and all of a sudden somebody collars you and pulls you into the alley and says, *"Wait a minute." [Laughs]* "You don't know what's happening here, my friend." And starts to tell you that story. And he starts to: "Man, you better keep your eyes on the prize, because it's coming down." And so that was the way I approached that.

The line you really brought out in that song for me, which I hadn't really thought about, I guess, is "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now." Which felt very personal.

Well, you're making all those connections. To do it right, you are understanding the journey the song's taking, and you're acknowledging its history; but you're acknowledging your own history, too. That's what makes things work, creatively. Those are the two things that I try to connect together. *[Plays and sings first verse again.]* And now it opens up with *Hold on, hold on...* a few more people are in on the secret now ... *Keep your eyes on the prize / Hold on....* That's a personal statement, or a political one. And this guy's thinking, how am I gonna save my ass, right now? *[Laughs]*

I got my hand on the gospel plow / Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now—and then it opens up again—*Hold on.* I continue sort of telling this secret story, right up through up *Only chain that a man can stand / Is that chain o' hand on hand / Keep your eyes on the prize... I'm gonna board that big Greyhound / Carry the love from town to town*—that sounds sinister, and it's supposed to. It's a threat. *[Laughs]* That's a threat, you know? It's meant to be read as both a promise and a threat. So *Hold on...*

And the guy keeps telling his story: *The only thing I did was wrong / Stayed in the wilderness too long...* He's just talking about himself. Then, it moves, and the background singers enter: *The only thing we*—bang! the song expands and opens up—*we did was right / Was the day we started to fight.* Suddenly the guy

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

in the alley is in the street. He's in the street, and he's not alone, he's not by himself. He's surrounded by other people. And other people are picking this secret up, and it's turning into not such a secret anymore. That bursts wide open after the next chorus, after the horns hit and play a real guttural Dixieland, and all the singers *[intensely]: The only thing we did was wrong / Stayed in the wilderness too long....*

Now you're singing out.

And you're testifying.

Right. And you're shoutin' at somebody, and it's a promise, and it's a threat, and now the guy's not in the alley, now everybody—people are out there. And that's where the song moves, right up to its very end *[softly]: Ain't been to heaven, but I been told / Streets up there are paved with gold.* And you get a little refrain of your original singer again.

So that's the way I approached those songs particularly, was they had to go from the deeply, deeply personal, to the political, to the gospel.

From the frightened, isolated man to the empowered? Is that the idea?

The frightened man. Yeah. They had to go from that very—you know, the running man. And they had to start there. The doubt-

ing man. The guy who, whoa, he's not sure about the next step he's gonna take. And move out into the other stories. And really, I approached the freedom songs...

Are the freedom songs, for you, "We Shall Overcome" and "Eyes on the Prize"? Do you include "O Mary Don't You Weep" in that?

Yeah, you would, you would. That starts out, the same thing—most of the stuff, it's that I've got to find... you, the singer, you have to find your individual place in it. Where's the story?

Did you read the *New Yorker* story about Pete Seeger?

I haven't seen it yet, no.

Well, it's very interesting, because that writer makes an interesting contrast—I don't even know if he intended to, it was just sort of laying there on the page. I think he intended to. It's a very good story for anybody out there who hasn't read it. But he talks about Pete almost trying to become transparent in these songs—I don't mean anonymous, I mean to let the song come through him, that that was his approach.

And of course, you're in here, you and the writer are talking, and you talk about finding *yourself* in the song. And that's a different approach. And I think that's why, if you listen to, say, your version of "Oklahoma Home" and Pete's version of "Oklahoma Home," Pete's trying to let that guy come through. You're *being* the guy.

Well, I think that whenever I say sort of "finding myself," it's not quite as simple as that. Because really, you're trying to find your voice in that music, so that the character can come forth and tell his story again. All valuable stories need to be told over and over and over again. And at the same time, yeah, obviously, it's that big collective "we" you're always on the lookout for, and so [it might be] misleading when I say...

I understood what you meant, and that's what I mean about finding yourself in the song is a way to give that character a life.

Yeah, and I do it with all the songs—on *Tom Joad* and *Nebraska,* everything I write, if it works, those mechanics have to be in place. Because it's the thing that connects the singer to the singers, and to the audience... and makes those walls as porous as can be. So those are the elements, whether it's *The Rising* or anything else, I'm always on the lookout for.

But the way to get to it, once again, is you've gotta—there's no cheap way to get to it! You gotta pay. The way you pay your dues on every song is by digging up the piece of you that has felt that frightened, that uncomfortable, that disempowered, that scared, that lonely, and that angry. That's the price of admission if you want things to fly. And then everybody starts singin' and talkin', and the song comes to life, and the character emerges and comes to life.

Well, this is making me think about "John Henry" because I've heard—well, *everybody* has heard John Henry, since *they* were a little baby. This one's different. That's the triumph, when Polly picks up the hammer at the end, it's different, because it's a personal triumph.

Yeah, his story keeps being told, the hammer keeps being swung. *[Laughs]*

That's the one song, when I was researching, I could never believe, it seems unquestioned: this *really happened.* Well, I don't know about the Polly part, obviously, but it really happened—some guy took this on! It's one of the most amazing things in American history to me, that somebody did that. To try to save his job. *[Laughs]*

The version I read—which is funny, this is a song I heard many other times in different guises, but I didn't remember the verse about Polly. I said, that's a cool verse! *[Laughs]* And it does lift the song to a different place, because the hammer continues to be swung.

Digging up the piece of you that has felt that frightened, that uncomfortable, that disempowered, that scared, that lonely, and that angry. That's the price of admission if you want things to fly.

And anybody can swing it.

Yeah—who's next? Anybody can. And that's the beauty of folk music, and the stuff that Pete has handed down. And obviously, Bob Dylan and everybody else.

Well, Bob sort of hovers around the fringes of this thing, doesn't he? You've got the one song, "Froggie," that you and he have both done now.

Bob is the father of my country, so... *[Laughs]*

The old, weird America.

And the one that I know! The one that I recognize. He was the guy who really first gave me a vision of my country that I recognized. Wasn't the one I got in history books in school; it wasn't the one that I was hearing completely on pop radio. Bob was the guy that really laid out the first map of America that was, I think, understandable and felt real and true. And so, a lot of us are running to this day on that inspiration. And so he's just always there.

But I think, for another generation, so are you. Not because you made this record, but because in a lot of ways you describe an America for people now that—you know, *The Rising* is part of that. *Devils & Dust* is part of that.

That was something that the guys that I loved—you know, Frank Sinatra did it. Hank Williams did it. Woody Guthrie did it. Bob Dylan did it. Elvis did it. James Brown did it, big time!

Maybe that's the circle on the beach where you belong, Bruce!

Curtis Mayfield. Marvin Gaye. Public Enemy. So, you have these seminal musicians that come along that—The Band, obviously—that for one reason or another want to tell that story. Those are the guys that I admired, and those are the things that I aspired to. And they still really are, you know? I just want to tell my part of that story—I want to be part of that story, I want to be a part of that circle on the beach. *[Laughs]*

Well, I think you are, and it's a big beach that runs the length of the country, so, we're all lucky to share it with you.

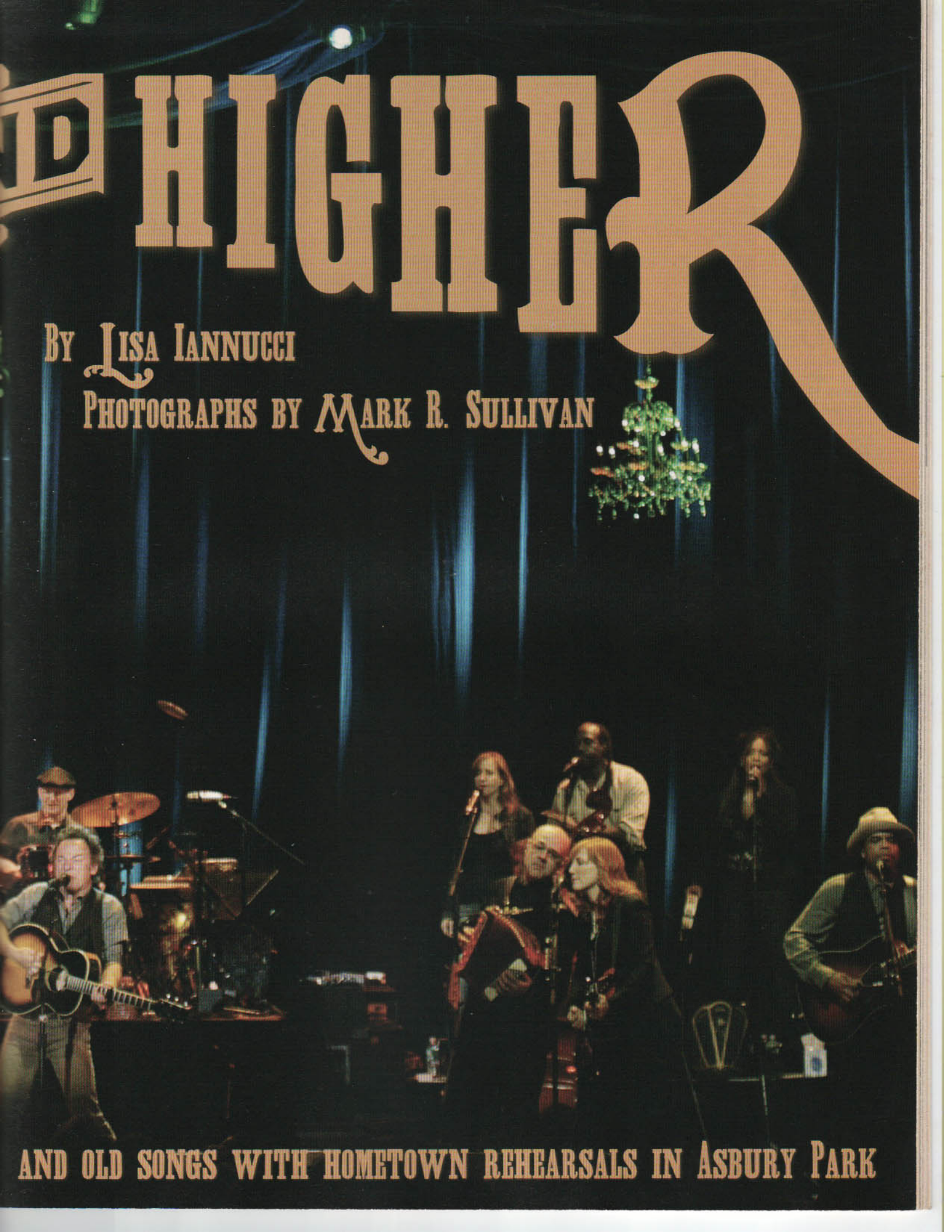
Listen to Kick Out the Jams with Dave Marsh *on Sirius Satellite Radio channel 102, Sundays at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 pm Eastern; Mondays at 1:00 a.m. Eastern.*

SEEGER SESSIONS BY THE SEA, AS BRUCE PREVIEWS A NEW BAN

ND HIGHER

By Lisa Iannucci

Photographs by Mark R. Sullivan



and old songs with hometown rehearsals in Asbury Park

"This music is either 'hokey' or 'stupid' to most people; they don't want to admit that they might be moved by it."

—heard outside Convention Hall, 4/24/06

APRIL 20
CONVENTION HALL
ASBURY PARK, NJ

- O Mary Don't You Weep
- John Henry
- Johnny 99
- Old Dan Tucker
- Eyes on the Prize
- Jesse James
- Adam Raised a Cain
- Erie Canal
- My Oklahoma Home
- Devils & Dust
- Mrs. McGrath
- How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?
- Jacob's Ladder
- We Shall Overcome
- Open All Night
- Pay Me My Money Down

- My City of Ruins
- Buffalo Gals
- You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)
- When the Saints Go Marching In

APRIL 24
CONVENTION HALL
ASBURY PARK, NJ

- O Mary Don't You Weep
- John Henry
- Johnny 99
- Old Dan Tucker
- Eyes on the Prize
- Jesse James
- Cadillac Ranch
- Erie Canal
- My Oklahoma Home
- If I Should Fall Behind
- Mrs. McGrath
- How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?
- Jacob's Ladder
- We Shall Overcome
- Open All Night
- Pay Me My Money Down

- My City of Ruins
- Buffalo Gals
- You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)
- When the Saints Go Marching In

THERE ARE MORE THAN A FEW doubters in the Springsteen fan base. Even amongst those who have already heard previews of the recorded material, people are not quite sure what to make of the *Seeger Sessions*. Many seem hesitant, almost embarrassed to admit they might like what they have heard. Ticket sales have been somewhat slower than normal, and there is a significant contingent of fans that is refusing to have anything at all to do with the Seeger material, preferring to wait for the return of the E Streeters. The size of the line waiting to get in on opening night of the stand is indicative of this ambivalence; it seems many attendees for this sold-out performance will arrive late.

Inside Convention Hall, the stage is crowded with microphone stands and instruments—it's easy to forget how much performance space is required for 17 people. Care has been taken with the set design for this show; the mood of the presentation is clearly very important to the overall experience. There are risers for the horns, keyboards and drums; three chandeliers hang from the rafters, colorful Japanese lanterns are hung on the lighting truss above the lip of the stage, and lush curtains frame its edges. A large, oval-shaped sign announcing this evening's entertainment hangs front and center, high above the stage: Bruce Springsteen with the Seeger Sessions Band. Down to the retro dressing of each stage monitor, the entire stage set echoes the old-time feel of a vaudeville show.

The lights go down, and it is clear at the outset that these shows will be different; there is attentive silence as the band walks onstage together, though that changes when the audience sees Bruce down front. "You guys are the guinea pigs," he wryly observes as he takes a beat up looking acoustic guitar covered with stickers and other paraphernalia—later referred to as his "magic guitar"—and strums nervously. It's clear he is still a bit unsettled; at several points during the four shows, he asks if they're in the right tempo. A capo gets put in the wrong place at one point ("You guys are supposed to tap me on the shoulder when that happens," laughs Bruce); later in the stand, a song starts in the wrong key. There are fits and starts, burps of static and feedback. But from the first note, there is an intensity about this music that grabs you by the throat—a roaring, stomping good time and a tightness and dexterity. Where the E Street Band entertains you, this band makes you want to be a part of it. You get so caught up in the ebb and flow, in each instrumental solo that you want to get up onstage and dance and sing. "O Mary" begins, and you remember all over again why you keep coming back when Bruce straps on a guitar; the power and the energy and the passion are a physical force that permeates the room.

Though they listen and applaud politely, people seem to be holding back a bit, seem to be waiting to see what will happen next. Next up is "John Henry," introduced as a "story of man vs. machine." As the song progresses, various band members take solos (in true folk tradition), and each is greeted with warm applause from the audience—especially banjoist Greg Liszt, who reacts with a shy smile after being reluctantly shoved to the front of the stage by Bruce for his mid-song solo. Patti Scialfa gets a turn at the mic, as Bruce shouts, "John Henry had a red-headed woman...."

A prominent aspect of this band is its diversity; as they break out their first Springsteen original, "Johnny 99"—the "funky banjo" version, as Bruce called it during rehearsals—Marc Anthony Thompson (A.K.A. Chocolate Genius) takes a verse (he will take several throughout the evening), backed by the "ooh-oohs" of vocalists including Curtis King and Cindy Mizelle, and the original Jukettes: Patti, Soozie Tyrell and Lisa Lowell. The composition of this band harkens back to some of Bruce's early bands, and it is a welcome change. This is inclusive music, and it is altogether fitting that every band member will get a chance to shine this evening.

DURING THE FIRST SHOW, SPRINGSTEEN introduces many of the songs by giving a bit of their history; after announcing early in the set that "this is an old song" (then sheepishly acknowledging that *all* the songs are old), he tries to invest them with a bit of context. But there is a lot of history to this material, and it is too complex to get into onstage. People don't seem to want a history lesson anyway, and after several songs, the comments get somewhat repetitive; eventually there is very little introduction to each song. That's probably how it should be—these songs really do speak for themselves.

But the staging helps. On the civil rights anthem "Eyes on the Prize," a dark stage and the simplicity and stillness of an acoustic guitar and banjo give way to bright lights and a rousing chorus, and we see that at each of the four mics at the stage front, there is a pair of singers: Frank Bruno and Cindy, Soozie and Lisa, Bruce and C.G., Patti and Curtis. And the "hold on" refrain rings out, and you see that there are African-American faces and white faces on the stage, and they are sharing microphones. Thompson sings the next verse with eyes closed, and (perhaps unconsciously) makes a fist as he sings "The only thing that we did right/Was the day we start to fight." Everyone joins in to

Get a leg up! April 25, 2006.

repeat this verse, and then the song closes with C.G. taking the final few lines: "Ain't been to heaven but I been told/streets up there are paved with gold." There are no explanations needed here; these songs have been around a long time precisely because they inspire moments like this.

Another striking aspect of the staging is how Bruce uses the sheer numbers of the band to create a visual impact; at several points during the show, the entire band is called down to the front of the stage, where they take up every last inch of available space. Everyone in this band is equal, and everyone is welcome. More than a few of these musicians have never encountered anything like the audiences at Springsteen shows, and it is heartening to see their faces light up when the crowd roars its approval. It's especially moving to see Bruce introduce his cousin Frank by telling the story about how he learned to play the guitar from Frank's father. He explains that the former's presence on the stage and on the record itself is symbolic; it is a family connection, a blood tie that pulls the past and the present together.

Bruce is also tying things together with this music: on a reworked "Cadillac Ranch," he inserts the chorus to "Mystery Train" while the horns blare. Naturally there must be a few crowd-pleasers—some of his originals must be thrown into the mix. But who would have guessed that he would call upon the long-gone voice of Little Junior Parker to save the day? The answer is *of course* he would—train songs are the bedrock of early country and rockabilly, and thus a most fitting part of these proceedings.

During "Jesse James," the entire horn section is called down front, and they create a sonic blast as one by one they solo and then join together for the finale. The energy in the room is remarkable—it truly feels as if the room will explode at any minute. And then, the night takes a somber turn, as the stage goes black and Bruce steps forward to introduce "Mrs. McGrath."

APRIL 25
CONVENTION HALL
ASBURY PARK, NJ

- Jesse James
- O Mary Don't You Weep
- Johnny 99
- John Henry
- Eyes on the Prize
- Old Dan Tucker
- Cadillac Ranch
- Erie Canal
- My Oklahoma Home
- If I Should Fall Behind
- Mrs. McGrath
- How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?
- Jacob's Ladder
- We Shall Overcome
- Open All Night
- Pay Me My Money Down

- Turn! Turn! Turn!
- Buffalo Gals
- You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)
- When the Saints Go Marching In

APRIL 26
CONVENTION HALL
ASBURY PARK, NJ

- Long Black Veil
- O Mary Don't You Weep
- John Henry
- Johnny 99
- Eyes on the Prize
- Adam Raised a Cain
- Old Dan Tucker
- Cadillac Ranch
- My Oklahoma Home
- Mrs. McGrath
- How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?
- Jacob's Ladder
- We Shall Overcome
- Open All Night
- Pay Me My Money Down

- If I Should Fall Behind
- Buffalo Gals
- You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)
- The Man on the Flying Trapeze

REHEARSING THE REHEARSALS

On a chilly, fog-enshrouded morning in mid-March, Bruce Springsteen gathered his new Seeger Sessions Band for the first of a dozen or so rehearsals for their tour in support of *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*. The release of the album was still a month away—as were the open rehearsal shows. On the Asbury Park boardwalk, Convention Hall was silent except for the sound of the handful Asbury Park municipal employees who arrive each morning to sweep and mop the vast tile floor, and the occasional cyclist or jogger. No one seemed to notice anything unusual going on.

But I knew these would be unusual rehearsals for me and for fans in general. For the first time ever, I knew almost all of the songs that were set to appear on the new yet-to-be-heard record that would be be drifting across the boardwalk in the days ahead. Instead of frantically trying to decipher lyrics as the songs were played, I found that the words came to me out of the dimness of childhood memory, most of them having been etched there in times and places I cannot recall. These are songs that are as close to me as my own family; they come from deep inside, and are as much a part of the American landscape as baseball or the Fourth of July. I recall learning some of these songs in grade school music class, others at sing-alongs and folk festivals (plentiful in the active folk scene of my hometown of Washington, DC). Some I learned from television shows (who would ever have thought that watching *Little House on the Prairie* religiously would come in handy?), and some from my father's sizeable folk music collection. Some it seems I was born knowing, having no recollection of ever not knowing them or where it was I might possibly have learned them.

Rehearsals with the Seeger Sessions Band, including the Miami Horns, took place at the Paramount Theatre through the end of the week of March 24; they resumed across the walkway at Convention Hall proper in the two weeks prior to the Asbury Park rehearsal shows, when the "Europe horn section" made its appearance. Not everyone was present at all the rehearsals—in fact, Patti was there only a handful of times. The Miami Horns returned for the final two or three rehearsals prior to the shows, where both horn sections appeared. These rehearsals were long, detailed and grueling, and the musicians would leave one or two at a time looking drained. Bruce was always the last one to leave, and is expeditiously escorted to his car, a dirty black bandana encircling his head.

Focusing largely on material from the new record, Bruce played each CD track for the band prior to live performance, as part of the rehearsal process. He also added some surprising unreleased covers to the mix— "When the Saints Go Marching In," "The Man on the Flying Trapeze," "Long Black Veil," "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?"—and dipped into his own catalog, running through "This Hard Land," "Cadillac Ranch," "Devils & Dust," "My City of Ruins," "Jesus Was an Only Son," "Adam Raised a Cain," "Further On (Up the Road)," "If I Should Fall Behind" (including a stone cold hard country duet version, with Bruce as George Jones, different from what they would eventually bring to the stage) and "Open All Night."

The first thing that struck me about these rehearsals was how great this band sounds—they swing, they roll, they stomp, they wail. They have come from different backgrounds to form this amazingly cohesive unit, and the music itself is just as disparate: as they work through each song, I can hear jump blues, gospel, country, blues, zydeco, Western swing, New Orleans jazz, Celtic, bluegrass and folk all rolled into one Cosmic American Music (with apologies to Gram Parsons) pouring forth from behind the pale green doors of the Paramount.

The first song I heard at the March 13 rehearsal was "Old Dan Tucker," and it is still one of my favorites. As with most of this material, it features a full-throated, belting vocal style by Bruce. What also struck me immediately was the number and diversity of instruments employed—at times, it seemed more like the Seeger Orchestra! There were the instruments usually associated with this type of music: fiddle, banjo, acoustic guitar. But suddenly a trombone would make itself heard. And an accordion! What a glorious mixture of styles and musical flavors—and all this on that song I discovered through Laura Ingalls Wilder!

The highlight of the morning for me was the joyous "Jacob's Ladder." Bruce's description of how he wanted the horn intro/exit to sound on the latter tune was priceless: "I want this to be more Chuck Berry than Django Reinhardt." Before I could wrap my mind around *this* musical

"This is an old Irish anti-war song," he says, dedicating the song to activist Cindy Sheehan. Cousin Frank pounds a bass drum that he wears over his shoulders, marching band style. The lights assume a green-blue hue as they dim, and the song gets darker and louder and angrier until it rolls to a climax, and then everything falls silent. Bruce is alone at center stage, the band drops back, and we hear in the song's final verse that he has, in true folk fashion, altered a couple verses to suit the times:

All foreign wars, I do proclaim
Live on blood and a mother's pain
I'd rather have my Ted as he used to be,
Than the King of America and his whole navy

Next up is the heart and soul of this presentation, the real question that needs to be asked of every American: "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?," dedicated simply to the people of New Orleans, "who have suffered great trials." Again, lyrics have been altered; in this case, Bruce has kept the original first verse and written three of his own. Full of pointed criticism, they hit the mistakes of the Bush administration square on with a cold steel hammer. There is a pulsating, pounding backbeat and heavy bass drum, and for a moment, it is almost as if by the sheer force of sound they could knock some sense into the sleepwalking American public. There is a driving horn riff here that echoes The Manhattans' "Kiss and Say Goodbye," (a mid-70s R&B hit), and you can feel all Bruce's musical influences coming together once again. All of the emotional stops are pulled out, and this is powerful stuff indeed. The looks on the faces of band members as they see that audience is *getting it* are unforgettable.

A surprise comes when Bruce pauses mid-set on night two to ask for a couple shots of tequila, which are promptly brought onstage in plastic cups by a stagehand. (When have we *ever* seen him drink onstage

during one of his own shows?) "Loosens up the vocal cords," he chuckles. The pedal steel whines, and the band beats out waltz time as Bruce and Patti pair up for "If I Should Fall Behind." Not quite the George Jones and Tammy Wynette heard at rehearsal, but a full-throated, country duet just the same; Bruce is even moved to invite couples in the audience to dance the waltz, and the crowd sings along in top voice for the closing refrain. Bruce revisits the waltz on night three, repeating the toast with his Mrs., and muses, "A lot of people tell me they use this for their wedding song. To me, I don't know, it always seemed more like a preventive-divorce song. The audience laughs as Bruce continues, "This song is, like, two people sitting at a bar for a long time *with good reason.*"

The shows near their close with the inspirational "Jacob's Ladder," which once again draws the band down to the lip of the stage. More than any of the other songs, this is an audience participation number, and Bruce encourages everyone in the room to join in. Key changes take the song higher as the lyrics climb to their conclusion, and suddenly it is as if we are all at a revival meeting. We are on a journey; we are all going somewhere together, and the music is carrying us along. This is what music is supposed to do, Bruce seems to be saying, and how easily we have forgotten that. ☞

marriage, let alone wonder how in the world they were going to pull it off, out came a blast of horns sounding just as Bruce had described it—the opening riff from "Johnny B. Goode"! As the song progressed, it gained in strength and power, the organ wailing and the soul-shouting gospel vocals raining down. I remember hearing this tune used in the soundtrack for Ken Burns' Civil War documentary, and could hardly believe it was the same song—it sounded as though it had been dropped into a jazz funeral in New Orleans.

Another priceless moment came on the transcendent "O Mary Don't You Weep," which like several of these songs starts off quietly and builds to a rafter-rattling conclusion. At one point, about halfway through, Bruce stopped the band and offered some instruction. It sounded good, he said, but "we want them to throw their clothes off" in ecstasy by the time the song is done. Typical Bruce hyperbole, but it was right on.

I walked away from this first day of rehearsal shaking my head at the broad range of musical styles and the amazing ability of Springsteen to synthesize all these elements into a coherent whole—these songs with such varied histories, these musicians who formed the new band—and to make it all work.

A week later, on March 20, the garage-rock version of "Ramrod" sounded for all the world like ? and the Mysterians had made a guest appearance. But what completely flabbergasted me was "Eyes on the Prize," which had me in tears by its conclusion. I have heard this song on the soundtrack of countless civil rights documentaries, but it has never rung so true to me. From the exultant New Orleans-style horn break to the stark refrain "hold on"—this is music at its most powerful. Before I could gather myself, they broke into "We Shall Overcome." I didn't expect much deviation from the previously recorded version, but the stark opening, featuring Bruce on solo vocal, built into a moving arrangement backed by gospel choir. As it happened, an African-American municipal employee wandered by as this song was being rehearsed. He recognized the anthem immediately and seemed somewhat surprised to hear it in such a context, asking me why it was being played. "Just rehearsing," I said, and shrugged. It was becoming clear that this music would indeed be difficult to explain.

I was struck at this second listening by the sheer effort put forth to arrange these songs so that each one has a distinct personality. It would have been so easy—and folk music is notorious for this—to give every song a straight 3/4 or 4/4 backbeat, set up an upright bass, acoustic guitar, fiddle and banjo, etc., and be done with it. But these arrangements are complex and bold; they draw from a spectacular array of musical styles. And they *work*.

For Bruce, this band and this music has its roots in the crazy quilt sound of *The Wild, The Innocent and the E Street Shuffle*, but its journey extends far beyond Asbury Park. This once ubiquitous "old time" music defies categorization. At one time, it was present in all aspects of American life (both high- and low-brow): covered wagons, parlors, churches, dances, barrooms, sailing ships, cotton fields, slave shacks, juke joints and brothels. It was the soundtrack of people's lives, their entertainment, their healing elixir. Some of it is older than the city of Asbury Park, and its joyous sound is the beating heart of America itself.

And I can't help thinking that it is going to throw concertgoers for a major loop. What will more conservative fans make of this populist Seeger, and what will the average fan make of these long story-songs and rollicking, freewheeling musical arrangements? (And yes, that is a description that was once used to describe Bruce's music.) Some of these songs are quite lengthy, and they don't end until the story is done—and all have taken a solo. Will everyone have the patience to listen? And will they be moved to participate?

Folk music is relentlessly participatory by its very nature; it is not sit-and-listen music—it's get-up-and-shout-it music. And it has always served two primary functions: to tell people's stories, and to heal their troubles. And what I think most fans will be surprised to find is that it's fun to sing this stuff; it makes you feel good. Springsteen's live shows have always been as much about audience participation as onstage performance, but I think that audiences will find that on this particular tour, they will be coming away from the shows not only elated by the power of the music emanating from the stage, but with a newfound appreciation both for their own voices and for the power of singing itself.

—Lisa Iannucci

TIME TO RISE AND SHINE

Rock stars are no strangers to seeing the sun rise—it's usually the time they finally head to bed. And in his bed is where Bruce seemingly wanted to be as daylight broke over Asbury Park's Convention Hall on Tuesday April 25, just an hour before he and his Seeger Sessions Band were to perform on ABC's *Good Morning America*.

"This is awful!" said Bruce of the early morning wake-up call, before chuckling a bit. "I salute you early risers... I must really wanna sell a lot of records to do this!"

Moments before, a disheveled Bruce—sporting a tan jacket covering a sweatshirt, dark sunglasses and a more messed-up than usual mane of hair—had emerged from behind the stage curtains to the delight of the surprised crowd, initially looking a bit lost, then finding his bearings and center stage. Considering that he and the band had left the same stage after 9:30 p.m. the night before, after finishing the second of four rehearsals at Convention Hall, it was understandable that he appeared a bit groggy.

It was a more-awake Bruce who returned to the stage with his full 18-member band in tow around 7:45. The group treated the lucky audience to two versions each of "Jacob's Ladder", "O Mary Don't You Weep," and "Old Dan Tucker" (a rehearsal of each, as well as the *Good Morning America* performance; "Old Dan Tucker" was broadcast later on *GMA*'s Sunday edition). The audience also got one-and-a-half takes of Bruce's slowed-down, stunning version of "When the Saints Go Marching In," which was performed in the downtime between the songs meant for broadcast. Overall, the performances were great, with the exception of "Old Dan Tucker," which was a bit ragged.

Music, however, wasn't the morning's only entertainment, as Bruce showed his comedic side, conversing good-naturedly with the crowd as well as interacting with the stage manager who was coordinating the live performance. Yes, the early morning start time was a bit rough for both performer and audience alike, but Bruce seemed determined to make it worthwhile for everyone. Early on, he was obviously struggling being up and playing so early in the morning (as evidenced by the frequent gargling and the handful of throat lozenges that Patti kept feeding him), but he really made an extra effort to give the crowd a little extra and make it a fun event.

After the broadcast of "O Mary Don't You Weep," the stage manager approached Bruce to talk about the next song, and he told her, "feel free to join us... there's so many people [in the band] no one will even notice. You'll just slip right in!"

Earlier, a puzzled Springsteen blurted out, "So no one had to work today? That's kinda impressive." After the crowd's laughter subsided he acknowledged a few vacancies across from the stage: "We do have some empty seats, so there some responsible citizens out there—just not here."

At one point, waiting to play, Bruce was told they were wrapping up the weather and that he still had two minutes to go. With not much time to do anything else, Bruce stood there strumming the guitar. Then he started whistling while he strummed to keep both the crowd and himself amused. It sounded like a theme to an old spaghetti western.

"When they come back, I'm gonna do that," he told the crowd. "Just three minutes of whistling." He continued: "No more 'The Boss'—I'll just be 'The Whistler.' Hey, The Whistler is coming to town! You know that guy who whistles? *He's* coming. *The Whistler.*" And finally: "I saw The Whistler last night..." He paused and added slyly, "and he was *good.*'"

And immediately after the "Jacob's Ladder" performance—though, sadly, not broadcast—Bruce proclaimed, "And now, the weather!"

And so, with the morning sun beginning to heat up Convention Hall, his grey shirt blackened with sweat, his Vaudevillian-esque comedy and music show concluded to the delight of several hundred lucky and delighted fans.

"Thanks for coming out so damn early," Bruce said laughingly as he waved see-ya to the crowd. *"Ouch!"* And lastly, with a laugh, "I finally got my voice!"

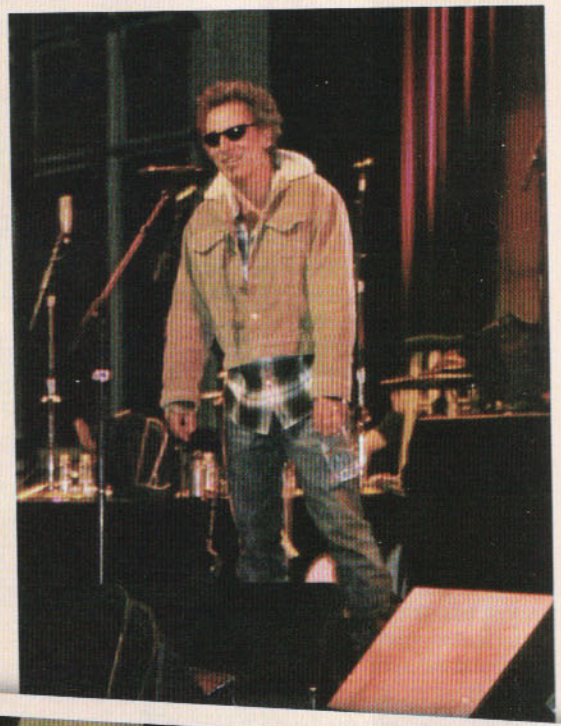
—John Schlicher

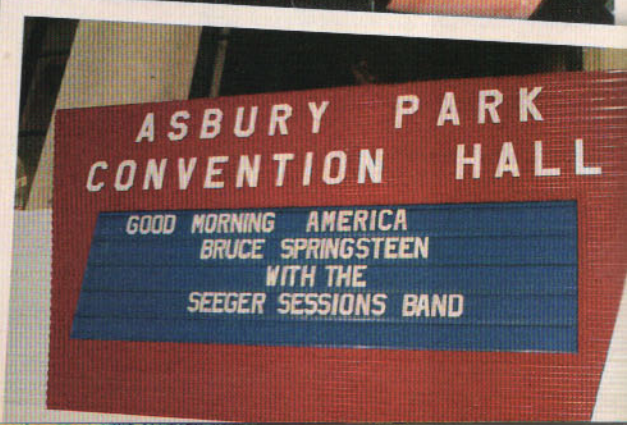
APRIL 25 (EARLY)
CONVENTION HALL
ASBURY PARK, NJ

- Jacob's Ladder
- O Mary Don't You Weep
- Old Dan Tucker
- When the Saints Go Marching In
- Jacob's Ladder
- O Mary Don't You Weep
- Old Dan Tucker

BEFORE EVERYONE GETS TOO SWEPT away, however, it's time for band introductions, and Bruce goes through how each individual or group of musicians came to be in the band: the horns are in the Asbury Jukes; Patti, Soozie and Lisa sang together years ago; Soozie brought the others to his house for a party; and so on. On night one, he almost forgets cousin Frank until Patti reminds him. She is truly the den mother/stage manager for these proceedings, egging on the more reticent members of the band during the show, and playing the foil to Bruce's onstage antics. But more than that, she is, as Bruce himself proclaims in her introduction, the musical director of this band, having arranged the vocal parts for much of the Seeger material. Certainly none of this would have come together without her input, and without the talent and connections of her good friend, Soozie Tyrell. There are truly women at the heart of the *Seeger Sessions,* and that's a good thing.

Another civil rights anthem follows, "We Shall Overcome." There is much baggage attached to this song, and certainly a burden of expectation always surrounds its singer. For his rendition, Bruce has chosen the understated approach, beginning the song on acoustic guitar with a single white spot. Slowly, the accordion creeps in, and other





vocalists step to the foreground and join in to sing "We shall live in peace." Once again, the visual is very important: Patti, just to Bruce's left, is sharing a mic with Curtis King on one side and Marc Anthony Thompson on the other. For the final verse, Bruce brings the majority of the band down to his mic, where they all form a semi-circle, as if they were at a protest rally or around a campfire. The song, to which many audience members sing along, has a calming effect. At moments like this, it really does seem like music can make everything all right.

The sets close with the double whammy of "Open All Night"—an earth-shaking jump blues revamp—and the rousing "Pay Me My Money Down." The former song leads in with a boogie-woogie piano interlude and the Jukettes vocal trio, who aptly resurrect the spirit of the Andrews Sisters before yielding the stage to Bruce, the M.C. The whole thing churns into frenzied call and response contest ("all right"!) before ending with an invitation lifted from the song title: "C'mon in everybody 'cause we're open all night!"

"Pay Me My Money Down" is humorously introduced as the second most well-known sea chantey—the first being "Louie Louie," which Bruce promptly demonstrates by taunting the crowd with a few lines. Even amongst the naysayers, "Pay Me" seems to be the one song everyone enjoys, and Bruce has no problem getting the audience on their feet for this raucous sing-along. Once again, the band comes to the lip of the stage for the rousing finale before departing the stage in a long line, jazz funeral style. As the song ends, there is only Larry Eagle on drums and Art Baron tooting away on the tuba. He plays for a bit, the lights dim, and Baron concludes the main set with a shrug of his shoulders as Eagle stands up and waves his sticks in the air—shtick that will be refined as the shows continue.

"Now go home and teach everybody all those words!" Bruce declares, returning to the stage for the encores on opening night. Indeed, after being bombarded with all that verbiage, the audience deserves a break, and the stark simplicity of "My City of Ruins" seems the perfect antidote. The new arrangement, which starts with Bruce on acoustic instead of piano, lacks some of the intensity of its prior incarnation on the *Rising* tour, but it serves its purpose here, reminding folks that Asbury Park needs help, too. On night three, Bruce leads off the encores with a dedication of the Byrds-ish rendition of "Turn! Turn! Turn!" to its composer, Pete Seeger—a great moment, but not absolutely essential to the set. Night four features the folk standard "Long Black Veil" as the lead-off, arranged similarly to The Band's version.

Enough solemnity—time for the party! "This is one everybody knows," Bruce grins, and against a stage backdrop of a full moon, he launches into "Buffalo Gals." Everybody in the band, it seems, gets to sing a verse on this one, and there is even a tuba solo before the whole things ends a cappella style. Then it's time for the zydeco party—the washboard comes out for "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)," and the audience is bopping along (there is no room for two-stepping) right up to the humorous conclusion.

After an announcement of local charities that will be receiving proceeds from the shows ("Save Tillie" gets a nice round of applause), comes the evening's finale, "When the Saints go Marching In." This Crescent City standard has been drastically re-worked; it is now a prayerful dirge for the city of New Orleans, and when, upon recognizing the song, the audience wants to clap along, Bruce requests silence. It is a quiet, almost mournful rendition, and Convention Hall is silent as the song is played. This ubiquitous New Orleans "party song" is being performed as a show of respect to the city, its people, and the suffering they have endured together, and the dramatically understated version works perfectly. Bruce performs a verse, then he and Patti, then the Genius takes a verse, and then finally, as they have done throughout the evening, CG and Bruce share the front mic to conclude the song. Barely whispered, this prayer for the city hangs in the air as the band pauses in silence, waiting for the audience's applause. It is the perfect homage to the beating heart of New Orleans, and a perfect ending to the emotional rollercoaster of the evening's performance.

THE LAST SONG ON THE LAST NIGHT IS, of all things, "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze." As the music commences, there is a pause—a sigh and a smile of recognition in the audience—and as the song progresses, it seems that everyone gets caught up in the melodrama of the lyrics. It is music from a simpler time, and—despite Bruce's occasional insertion of the f-word throughout the song—people are taken in by the story of the young man and his girl. It is music that floated through the arcades and amusement rides on hot summer nights in Asbury Park a hundred years ago. Bruce knows this, knows the connection between this song and "Wild Billy" and all that came after. And if you close your eyes, you can smell the popcorn and cotton candy, the sweat and grease and salt air. The audience is carried along, swaying in a reverie, in a dream of the past. But all too soon, the lights come up and the spell is broken; we are back in 2006, and world events are both unsettled and unsettling. We walk out into the chill spring air of the Asbury Park night, and I can't help but wonder if this music will be enough to save this city, or if it can bring the wounded spirit of New Orleans back from the brink. There are powerful forces at work, and good does not always prevail. But on nights like this, you can close your eyes and dream.

HERE COMES

NOLA gets the rainbow

A BIG WET KISS UPON ARRIVAL

With less than 24 hours to go before Bruce Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band's set at the 37th Annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the skies were angry. The wind was howling in a circular motion, like a screaming feral cat chasing its tail, lifting debris and street garbage skyward.

Saturday's 9 p.m. soundcheck for Springsteen and his band, on the Acura stage at the Fairgrounds, was now pushed back twelve hours, until 9 a.m. Sunday—an ungodly time for Bourbon Street heathens and music journalists out until five in the morning. But for Springsteen and his expansive band, especially after a strong "cuppa N'awlins joe," 9 a.m. was as good a time as any to give it a go, except one thing: it was raining harder than it had been twelve hours earlier.

As band and crew loaded into vans, they dodged the silver bullet-sized rain drops pelting the washed-out walls of a desolate, sleeping and definitely hung over French Quarter. The rain intensified driv-

THE SUN

By Tim Donnelly

Photos by Danny Clinch

sign as Springsteen lights up Jazz Fest

ing up Esplanade, and the sky shook as we approached our turn at Mystery Street.

Feeling the mud move under our tires as we sank into our parking spot, my thoughts turned to whether I had brought a dry pair of socks with me. Never mind the fact that in a few hours time I'd be standing with 70,000 people in a quagmire.

"Pharaoh's army got drown-ded," I sang to myself in jest, dodging puddles of crud and muck, with a smile on my face.

Only the stage crew and intimate production personnel knew of the 9 a.m. soundcheck. As the band took their spots, Springsteen, wearing a tied-back bandana on his head, arrived to the stage with wife Patti and U2's The Edge in tow and greeted a "good morning" to everyone onstage, with the ever-present rain still falling.

As Springsteen stepped to the microphone and greeted the festival workers who had followed the sound, the rain suddenly stopped—and it stayed stopped all day. By the time they ran through "O Mary Don't You Weep," the sun had started to poke through.

"Do you realize what just happened?" asked Matthew Goldman, a Cherry Hill, NJ native who is the spokesperson for Jazz Fest.

"Ah, yeah," I responded. "I think The Boss just stopped the rain."

When a soundcheck becomes metaphysical, it's usually a good sign of things to come.

By song two of the soundcheck, "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?," I had already experienced head-to-toe chills and was brought to tears. I wasn't the only one, either. Burly stagehands of all

creeds and ages wiped their eyes and stood silent, awestruck by what they had just witnessed.

With bright smiles being thrown by The Edge (a guy who knows a wee bit about the power of music), perched on the side, Springsteen played directly to the ever-gathering crowd of lucky vendors and security guards. Their happiness and surprise couldn't be contained. He was playing their music, in their town, and delivering it to them with a song *about* them.

The deeper power of a newer meaning for "My City in Ruins" was clear from the first note. When the massive choral refrain of "Rise Up!" hit, the locals in the crowd were testifying, hands raised towards the brightening sky.

"Whoa," said Springsteen waving to the crowd. "I think we'll be alright later."

"Yeah, Bruce!" they screamed.

"It feels like church," I said to Goldman.

"I ain't Catholic, Donnelly," he laughed. "But I think I know what you mean."

BACKWATER BACKSTORY

Jazz Fest was my third time in New Orleans since New Year's. I first came here in 1986 during winter break, pulling off a hastily hatched and dangerously executed trip. We drove 24 hours from the Jersey Shore to the Crescent City, partied for 36 hours, and drove home with our heads hanging out the window all the way to Jerz, thus beginning my love affair with New Orleans.

There's no place on earth like this city, and I'm pretty sure everywhere else would like to keep it that way. Here, the fun is real. It's not manufactured and can't be imitated like in Orlando or Vegas. This is New Orleans, where the truth comes from the soul.

My work as a journalist brought me back here in January, as a field producer for the Danny Clinch-directed documentary, *In the Sun*. The film was an accompaniment piece for the Hurricane Katrina charity song of the same name done by R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe and Coldplay.

Armed with an iPod play list of New Orleans musicians and circumstance-fitting songs—including "Lost in the Flood," "Seeds," "Youngstown," "The Ghost of Tom Joad," and "Trapped"—I set out unescorted into the debris.

My friends from NOLA had told me horror stories and sent me photos. We all saw what happened. But until one is standing in the middle of it all, you don't know—you just can't feel it.

What I saw in my time there shocked me, appalled me, and made me physically sick. Standing in a pile of rubble that used to be a church and looking out for miles that cover the Lower Ninth and Ninth Wards, Lakeview, and over into coastal Mississippi—and knowing it's all completely leveled—is humbling, frightening, and mind-blowing.

Having a gun pointed at you by a fresh-faced Guardsman ain't fun either. Hearing stories of criminal behavior by insurance companies, crooked cops and scared politicians made me sad for this country and frustrated at what kind of deal these people are getting.

I'm not talking about race, either. Everyone got screwed. Black people, white people, poor people, the middle class and the wealthy—not in equal measure, of course, but everyone, in some way, shape, or form has gotten the high hard one.

Each street corner holds a thousand stories, but their stories are the same. The government doesn't have their back, and they will rebuild with or without them. The locals look, sound and feel better each trip I take down. So it may no longer be The Big Queasy, but it sure ain't back to being The Big Easy.

PROVING IT ALL AFTERNOON

"All right, this is our first gig. Let's hope it goes well." And with that, the rest of the day was just a career-defining, spiritual, cathartic experience, performed with tenacity, humbleness and grace. The conclusion: a monumental moment in the history of American popular music.

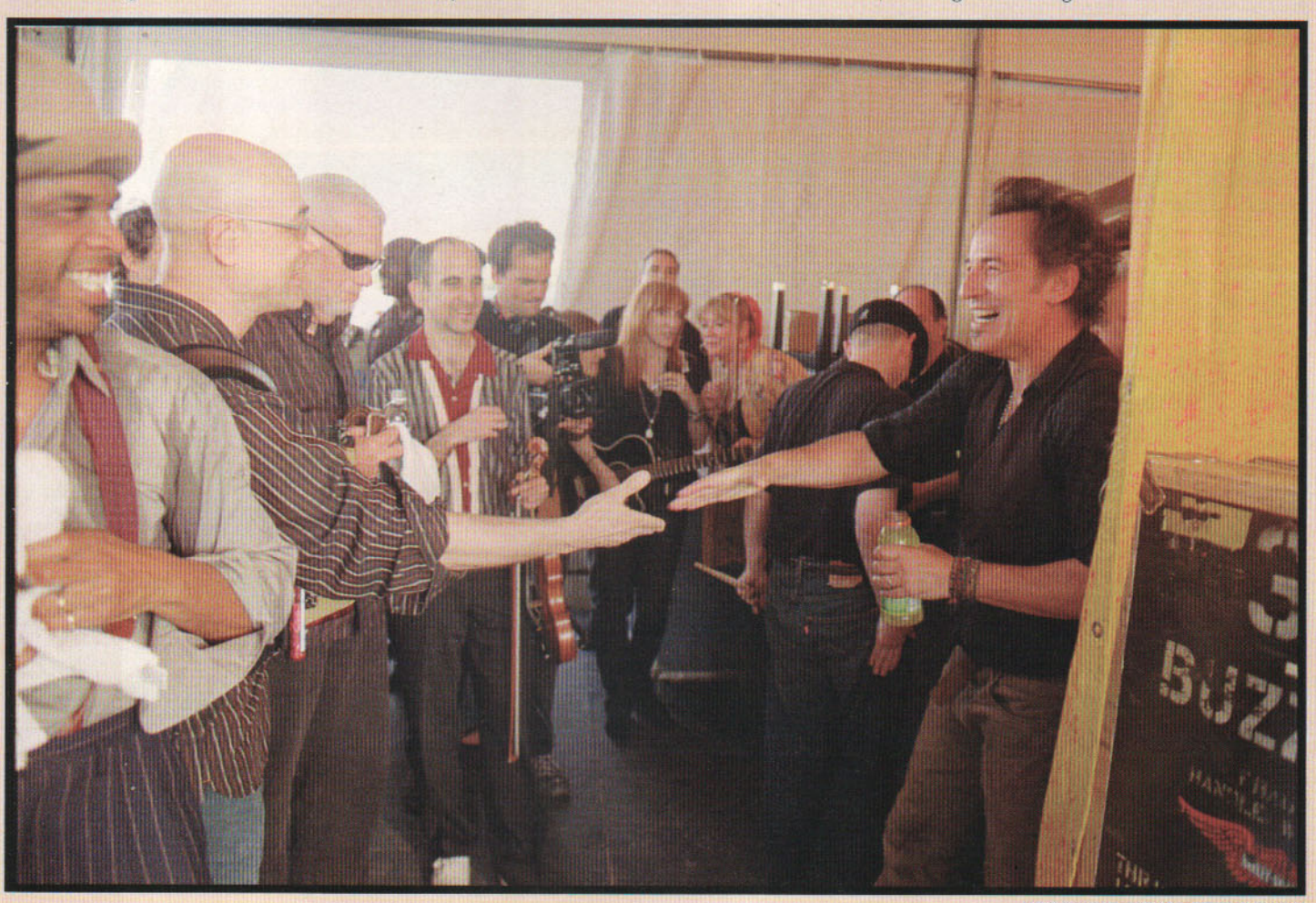
After the aforementioned words, multi-instrumentalist Charles Giordano's blues piano work dovetailed into the fiddles of Sam Bardfeld and Soozie Tyrell as Springsteen led the urgent "O Mary Don't You Weep," assuring those present that "there will be better times by and by." Following a trip on the good ol' accordion, Giordano jumped back to the piano for the solo, while the horn section comprised mainly of boardwalk Jukers kept pushing and pushing it forward.

The full sound literally blew people a step back, and Springsteen may have sensed it, judging by the widest smile I may have ever seen on his face, as Sam Barnfeld finished the song as quietly as it began. The reaction was swift: The Boss was here for them.

"Be right with you," said Springsteen before his next selection. He then halted, fiddled with his belt and looked up. "I am having a technical problem with my pants," he admitted to a sea of laughter.

Launching into "John Henry" with Johnny Ramone-like ferocity, Springsteen called for the fiddles to be turned up while the Seeger express steam train started chugging. The song of working oneself to death was being revved up to cardiac arrest, and this was only the second number. The dueling finale of the song with picking and plucking was pure do-si-do, but with the brass and accordions it became a Cajun roustabout.

"It's not just a new band. It's a new belt!" he laughed at song's end.



HAT TRICK *(left):* Elvis Costello, Patti, and Bruce score some free time backstage.

RESTLESS NIGHTS MEETS SOUTHERN NIGHTS *(below):* Bruce with New Orleans legend Allen Toussaint, whose classic *Southern Nights* came out the same year as *Born to Run*.

The most surprising song of the day may have been a fully actualized "Johnny 99," led by a snappy, jazzy and funk-infused drum and bass beat with the acoustic guitar of Marc Anthony Thompson before being joined by the full band. The depressing song of lost dreams and eventual condemnation never sounded more joyful. The horns played with the "Peter Gunn" theme like they were peeling crawfish, aggressive yet having fun in search of the sweet reward.

For "Old Dan Tucker," which Bruce called "a 150-year-old Bob Dylan song" with its "surreal" lyrics, he asked the crowd to clap along. From there the guard was down, and people were fully on board.

There will never be a deeper meaning in a more honest place than NOLA for what "Eyes on the Prize" stands for. The lyric, "keep your eyes on the prize/hold on" is a mantra for those I know who have been stuck in the middle of America's biggest homeland conundrum. Mark Pender's trumpet work was chilling and added a layer of real sadness to the harsh reality of holding on: emotionally, spiritually and physically. Thompson's soul shines every time he opens his mouth, matching Springsteen in urgency and need.

Stealing from the rich to give to the poor ain't exactly happening in NOLA these days, making a character like Jesse James sound quite appealing right now: "a man with a heart and a brain."

"This song was written during the other great American natural disaster in our country's recent history that separated families and drove Americans from their homes and left them spread out all over the country: the Oklahoma Dustbowl. I like the toughness and the wit in the writing of the song. The sound of laughter and a few tears."

I really had no idea how "My Oklahoma Home" would go over in front of people whose homes were either flooded or torn off their foundations. But this is New Orleans, and people can handle it— that's a given in a place where humor and irony are an art form. It's not acquired here, it's innate. So was the reaction to Springsteen's imploring of the call and response, during the "blowed away" chorus: people laughed and cajoled each other into singing the sardonic and funny response. The raucous Western swing was reminiscent of Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, as delightfully playful as the witty lyrics were for Springsteen.

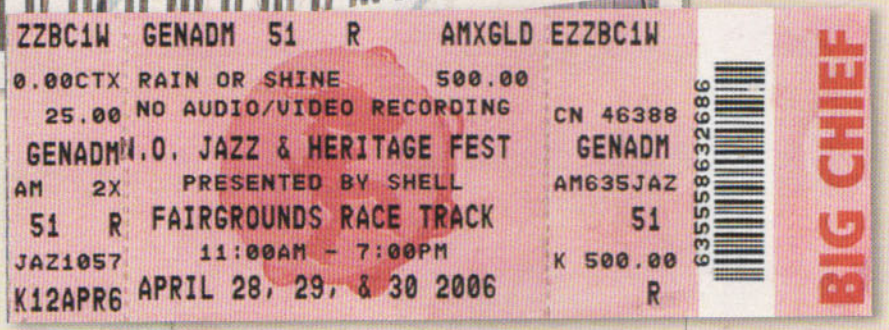
A somber and faithful reading of "Mrs. McGrath" gave way to the most impressive song of the day: "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" Here's Springsteen's intro:

"We had a chance to travel around New Orleans yesterday, from Lakeview to the Ninth Ward, and I think I saw sights that I never thought I would see in an American city. The criminal ineptitude makes you furious. This is what happens when political cronyism guts the very agencies that are supposed to serve American citizens in times of trial and hardships. This is what happens when people play political games with people's lives. This is a song by a fellow named Blind Alfred Reed, recorded a week after the stock market crash preceding The Great Depression. I kept the first verse, and I wrote three more. This is for New Orleans, dedicated to President Bystander."

He was interrupted by applause and cheers, hitting them in the heart with his words and then with the music. Bruce's new verses were met with fist-pumping and cheers and nods of approval. This song was for them, and they will bring it with them no matter where they end up.

I got family scattered from Texas all the way to Baltimore

RUTH BAROHN PHOTO



APRIL 30
JAZZ FEST
NEW ORLEANS, LA

- O Mary Don't You Weep
- John Henry
- Johnny 99
- Old Dan Tucker
- Eyes on the Prize
- Jesse James
- My Oklahoma Home
- Mrs. McGrath
- How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?
- Jacob's Ladder
- We Shall Overcome
- Open All Night
- Pay Me My Money Down

- My City of Ruins
- Buffalo Gals
- You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)
- When the Saints Go Marching In

RUTH BAROHN PHOTO

look a lot like New Orleans. But it's working hard. I want to sing this and dedicate it to the people and the city of New Orleans."

Hearing this song in Asbury after 9/11 paralyzed me. On this day, it was different: the strength far outweighed the sorrow. Seeing every single hand in the massive field raised, during the exaltation of "Rise Up"... writing about it still gives me chills.

Before introducing "Saints," Springsteen made it a point to reveal why he chose to perform it:

"I stumbled through a book of folk songs in the room that I write and came across this song, which always has had a special place in New Orleans history. It was one of those things that I thought was impossible to do. There are 100 people around town that will do it better than us.

"But I came across these two verses, the first and the middle verse, that I had never heard before. We started this project just fooling around loosely, and so much of the roots of the music that we played here tonight were born right here in the great mother city of American music. So we want to thank you for our warm reception.... You have all of our prayers and support. This is from New Jersey to New Orleans."

And I ain't got no home in this world no more
Gonna be a judgment, that's a fact, a righteous train rollin' down this track
Tell me, how can a poor man stand such times and live?

If that doesn't encapsulate the nine months of hell the folks down here have gone through, what does?

I have seen grown men and women in uniform cry, especially after 9/11, and during "We Shall Overcome" it was no different. Strangers were holding strangers, cops let their tears roll down their faces, grown men tightly held their children to their chests as women held their hands to the sky reaching for hope.

The set closer, "Pay Me My Money Down," actually sounded like "Pay Me My Money Now," a call from those getting the shaft. By set's end, to say that the crowd was in an enthralled state of purging their past is an understatement. The energy was unreal as all band members came to the front of the stage, totally lost in the moment of bringing it all home.

The two numbers in the brilliant encore that underscored the whole message of why Jazz Fest even happened this year were "My City of Ruins" and the most impressive and re-worked version of "When the Saints Come Marching In" heard in NOLA, at least on this Sunday.

"This is memorable," laughed Springsteen before introducing "My City of Ruins."

"This is a song that I originally wrote for my adopted hometown, Asbury Park—which has been going through its own very difficult times, and large parts of it

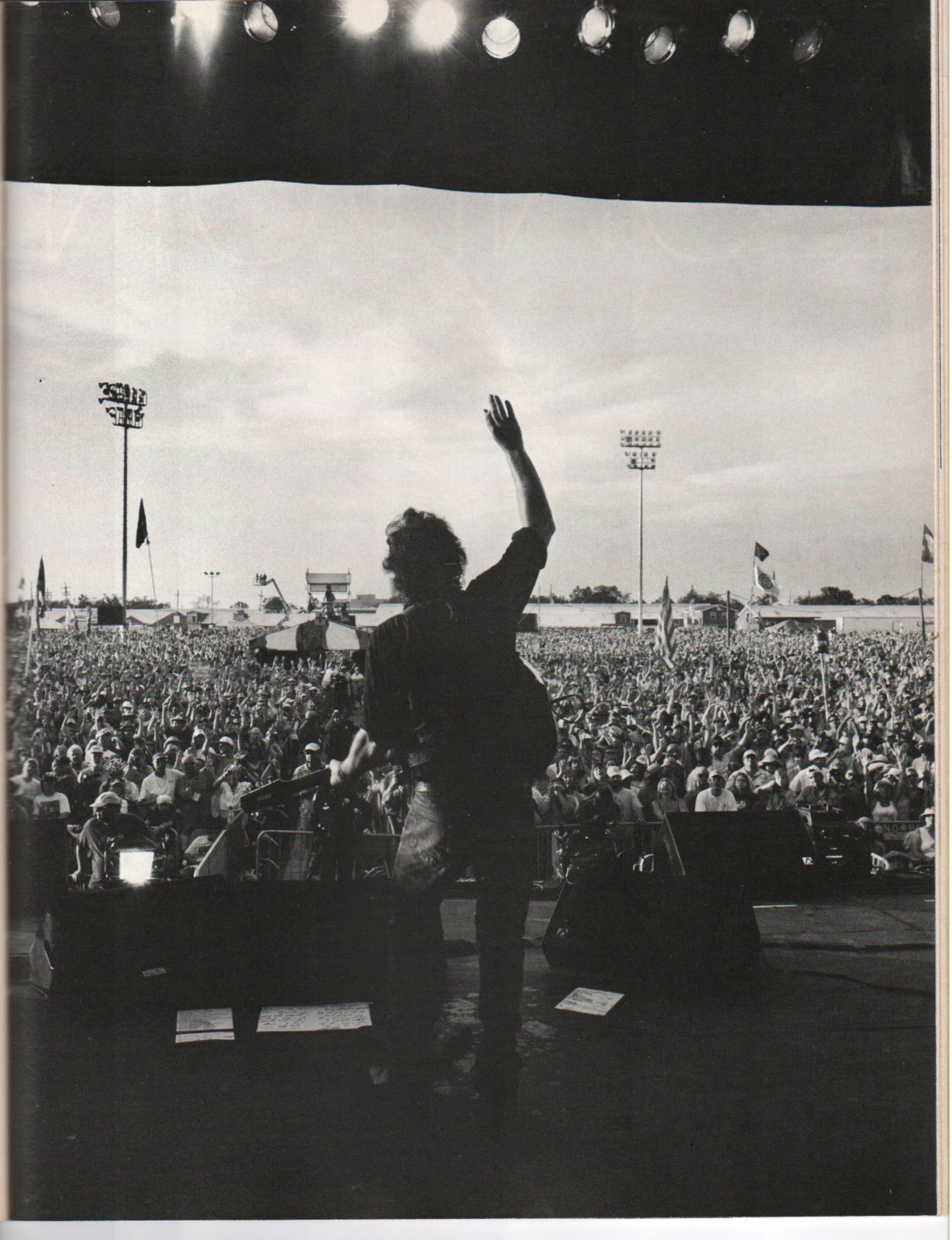
The quiet rendition threw the people expecting a funereal-style march off the stage. But this is Springsteen, who turned the "When the Saints Go Marching In" into a solemn hymn of hope with the emphasis on the verse:

When the new world is revealed
Lord, how I want to be in that number
When the new world is revealed

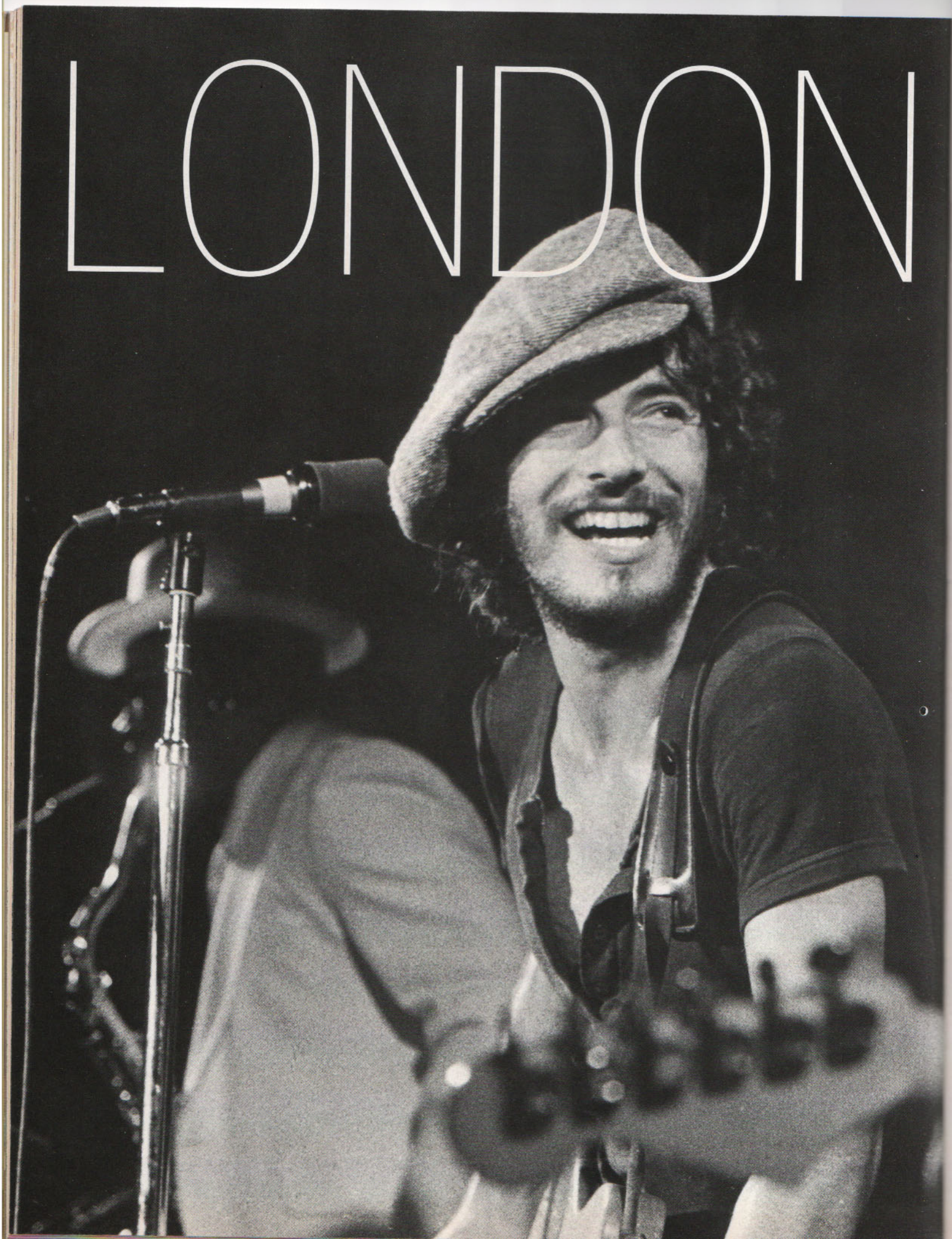
The new world had a layer unveiled on Sunday, April 30, 2006. It was brought to light not by a politician, bureaucrat, or even a musician, but by the people who embraced the healing power of music and what it means to the human soul, with Bruce Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band acting as a mere conduit in the great unveiling.

As the band left the stage, walking past the now bowing and genuflecting stage hands, Jazz Fest producer Quint Davis took the microphone and said, "This concludes the first weekend of the resurrection of New Orleans."

Springsteen and his band of folk healers were there for that number and humbly marched out of town, surely knowing full well that every ounce of positive energy they had given will be used for a better New Orleans today and tomorrow.



LONDON

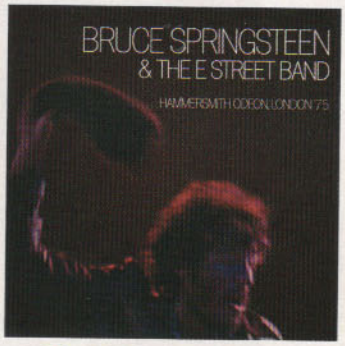


CALLING

(AND DESPITE WHAT WE'D HEARD FOR DECADES, IT AIN'T NO COLD CALL.) MAGNUS LAUGLO DELVES INTO THE REVISIONIST HISTORY OF HAMMERSMITH

The one thing I took away from my history degree more than anything else is the notion that our grasp of the past is constantly shifting, contentious and debated—there can never be a definite understanding of past events. With the release of the complete November 18, 1975 Hammersmith Odeon show, Sony has thrown down the gauntlet of revisionism on one of Springsteen's most mysterious—most hyped, and most disparaged—performances ever.

What has been written about that London concert over the past 30 years presents a checkered picture. A *Rolling Stone* article from 1975 quotes Steve Van Zandt commenting, "I've never seen him so subdued" and adds that a disappointed British CBS executive "thought Springsteen could have tried harder." Writing from secondhand sources a decade later, Dave Marsh suggests that Bruce's performance suffered terribly from being overwhelmed by the famous "Finally London is ready..." hype. An article in *Uncut* magazine from 2000 features interviews with various journalists and CBS employees who attended the show; their recollections range from cynical to ecstatic, but those who had seen Bruce perform before commented that this wasn't his strongest night. In the last issue of this magazine, Garry Tallent told *Backstreets*, "It was such an intense night that there's a lot I don't remember about it. What I *really* remember is that it wasn't really a great show!... I remember being like, 'This is *weird*, we're just not going *over* here.... This is not good!' People were just sitting on their hands and listening, and we weren't used to that.... For most of the show I just remember feeling very, very tense—feeling like, *this is not happening.*"



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND
Hammersmith Odeon, London '75 (DVD/2CD)

In the shadow of his own hype, Springsteen himself had remembered the concert as sub-par, but in retrospect he seems quite taken with the band's performance. "For me, the set went by like a freight train," he writes. "Later, all I can remember is an awkward record company party, that 'what just happened?' feeling, and thinking we hadn't played that well. I was wrong." Unlike many *Backstreets* readers, Bruce has perhaps not listened to live recordings from his own older shows for a very long time. Judging from the *Wings for Wheels* documentary and his liner notes duplicated in the CD release, it seems that revisiting footage of his early recordings and performances may have been a revelatory experience for him. You can almost see Bruce grinning with nostalgic pride as he describes "an E Street Band, with a good deal of the carnival still left in it and armed with a set list I still dare any young band to match."

Quite misleadingly, this year's official press release announcing the live album touts the show as if it had been some kind of landmark performance: "As soon as Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band took the stage that night, the performance immediately became a classic and defining moment in the history of the band.... The concert almost became a mythical event to long-time fans; it was seemingly a fabled story about one of the most legendary performances in the band's illustrious career." Reading this, you might easily assume they were releasing something like the Main Point or Bottom Line radio broadcasts from 1975. If anything, Springsteen's first European gig has traditionally been overshadowed in the annals of Bruce history by his second performance at the same venue six days later. The widely bootlegged 11/24/75 show was one of his longest at the time, chock full of covers and finished with nine songs in five separate encore sets. Video snippets of incomplete songs from 11/18/75 have surfaced over the years, but fans and collectors have never regarded this as a classic performance.

The 11/18/75 show has been released in its unedited glory—unlike *Live/1975-85*, no songs have been shortened. With the complete footage officially released on DVD and now CD format, fans can finally delve into the enigma of the first Hammersmith show. Has this gig essentially been a blameless scapegoat for the *Born to Run* hype for the past 30 years? Or was it in fact the sub-par performance we've been told for so long? And does the average diehard fan need the CD release, after already spending hard earned cash on the *Born to Run* 30th Anniversary box last year?

The show opens, as did *Live/1975-85*, with the stunning solo piano "Thunder Road," and while the London audience may have been comparatively tame, they do welcome Bruce to the stage with genuine, if not raucous applause. A brisk, bright-sounding "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" follows, fresh and without an ounce of fat. As soon as the band kicks in, you notice the difference between the professional remixing and remastering technology available to the Springsteen camp, and the sound

PETER CUNNINGHAM PHOTO

you'd expect from a high quality bootleg—the instrument separation here is a pleasure to behold. The 1975 *Rolling Stone* take on the show suggests "the typically reserved British audience" as a possible reason for a disappointing performance: "After an enthusiastic greeting, they remained cool toward Springsteen until his high-energy finale and encores when they finally got up on their feet." However, judging from the applause between songs, the band actually seems to have the attention and appreciation of the London crowd from the very get-go. An incomplete but good-sounding audience tape of the same show reveals that the appreciative crowd noise between the songs on the Sony release has been neither added nor cranked up in volume. From the stage, London may have seemed like a tough nut to crack, and who knows, the audience may have been sitting down for the whole show—but they were clearly having fun.

After a strong opening, the band does seem to struggle for a few numbers. Dave Marsh's claim, "He performed in a sullen rage that evening, spending a large portion of the night with his back to the crowd," turns out to be an exaggeration, but Bruce does avoid eye contact with the audience on the otherwise dramatic "Lost in the Flood." If the performance of "Born to Run" in retrospect sounds taut and hurried, this was actually quite normal for the period—the song had yet to gain status as a signature anthem for the band, and the new title track is buried in the main set. Perhaps most tellingly, the intro rap to "E Street Shuffle," during which Bruce would usually joke about with audience members and seem anything but rushed, is cut short—almost as if Bruce is about to start a story, and then second guesses himself.

Bruce may have been nervous, but he and the band play a tight and technically flawless performance. Bruce isn't phoning in the show—just listen to his vocal delivery on "Backstreets"—there is a lot on the line, and he doesn't allow himself to relax for one second. "Kitty's Back" gives the band space to stretch out and jam, representing the tail end of Springsteen's early experimental phase, which has received virtually no documentation outside of bootleg circles.

The encores are typically strong. A bootleg video snippet of "Sandy" from this show has been floating around for years, and since seeing it I've always questioned the "worst performance" tag the show seems to have been burdened with. This is simply a great delivery of a great song. The final three tracks are stalwart bootleg favorites which only now see official release on a Springsteen album. "Detroit Medley" may not be epic length, but it sizzles, and it's great to finally have an officially released recording of this chestnut on a mainstream release. (It has been available in edited form on the *No Nukes* live album under its alternative title "Devil with the Blue Dress Medley"). By the end of the show, seemingly having won over a vocal portion of the crowd, Bruce is confident enough to pause for breath and slow things down with a nice solo piano "For You," never released before in this slower rendition. The band quickly regains steam and closes the show with the classic E Street Band cover "Quarter to Three," which finally sees its first official release outside of the truly hard-to-find *No Nukes* video, and closes the concert with a final burst of energy.

HAMMERSMITH DOESN'T HAVE THE WILD MAJESTY OF THE BOTTOM LINE, THE LOOSE INSANITY OF THE MILWAUKEE "BOMB SCARE" SHOW, THE WARM GLOW OF THE ROXY..., BUT IT IS ARGUABLY THE TIGHTEST PERFORMANCE OF THEM ALL.

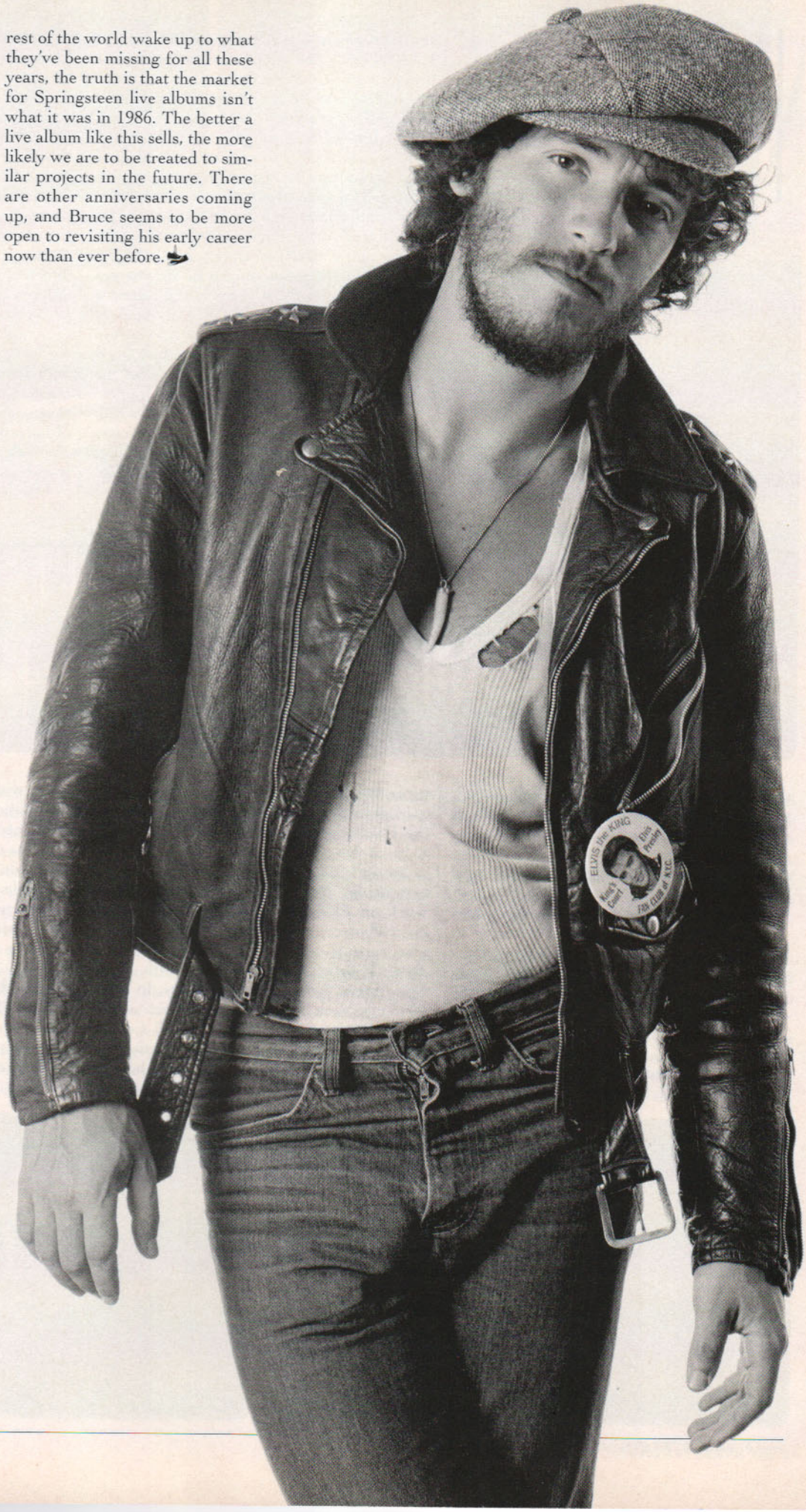
If this show lacks anything, it is audience interaction—compare it to the second London show, by which time Bruce had loosened up considerably. "Sprit in the Night" is a lot of fun (especially to watch on the DVD), but Bruce clearly isn't confident enough to pull his trademark stunt and actually jump into the crowd. This lack of audience interaction may be more of a problem for an actual show than it is for a live recording, and consequently the live album may come across better than the actual performance did. Compared to other well known performances for the *Born to Run* tour, Hammersmith doesn't have the wild majesty of the Bottom Line, the loose drunken insanity of the Milwaukee "bomb scare" show, the warm glow of the Roxy, or the endless encores of the second London show; but it is arguably the tightest performance of them all. In many ways it points forward to the future when the shows would become darker, less spontaneous, and more intense.

Thom Zimny, the DVD's producer/editor, has explained that the Hammersmith show was chosen for release simply because it was the best quality video footage from the era. Despite its technical imperfections (poor lighting, lack of audience shots), one is hard-pressed not to be floored by the DVD of the show. One of the many pleasures of watching it was that it gave me a broader context in

which to appreciate live recordings. Notice, for instance, Steve's prominent role as an instrumentalist, and how much Bruce played back then without his guitar. That sudden slowdown in tempo towards the end of "Spirit in the Night" which I had always wondered about made sense after seeing Bruce crawl off the stage during that section of the song, as if he were in fact "crawling into the lake." Bootleg collectors may have a list of other shows from 1975 that might have made "better" live albums, but having already polished up the soundtrack to the DVD, releasing 11/18/75 on CD makes good sense, and follows in the pattern set by *Live in New York City*.

Having the show on CD has its advantages too. Actually sitting down for two hours to watch a live show isn't something one might have time to do very often, but having the show on CD means it can be enjoyed far more conveniently. If the prime novelty of the DVD is the visual impact of watching a show, with the CD I found myself really digging the terrific sound quality. Of course they've tinkered with the sound and it all sounds miles better than it would have for anyone who was actually at the show—but a little touch-up and a little paint never hurt a good live album. This is an optimal presentation of a concert, not an attempt to recreate the experience of being there that hype-filled evening in November.

Even if you've already quietly and maybe guiltlessly ripped your own CD from the *Born to Run 30th Anniversary Edition* DVD you already spent money on, there's a more pragmatic reason to pick up the CD. While some of us might have naively imagined that the release of a complete show from the '70s would have made the rest of the world wake up to what they've been missing for all these years, the truth is that the market for Springsteen live albums isn't what it was in 1986. The better a live album like this sells, the more likely we are to be treated to similar projects in the future. There are other anniversaries coming up, and Bruce seems to be more open to revisiting his early career now than ever before.



Right: Springsteen in 1975, photographed by Eric Meola, from his forthcoming book *Born to Run: The Unseen Photos*, to be published in September by Insight Editions.

THE CUTTER

Inside Thom Zimny's modest New York editing studio, not far from the entrance to the Holland Tunnel, the 40-year-old film editor keeps two guitars tuned and ready for the moments when he needs a break. It's hard to imagine when he might have found much time to play.

In the last year alone, Zimny has assembled the three companion films that accompanied the 30th anniversary edition of *Born to Run—Hammersmith Odeon, Wings for Wheels,* and the L.A. 1973 bonus feature—and cut footage for the DVD release of *VH1 Storytellers*. Often, the projects overlapped, and Zimny worked simultaneously on each. With those completed and in the shops, Zimny worked on the accompanying film for *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*.

Like the *Tracks* box set, these performances and documentaries serve as a corollary to Springsteen's albums, giving his audience a different perspective on what he was aiming for with a particular song or record. On the video side of the DualDisc or on DVD, it's Zimny's job to ensure that the storyline is clear.

Most of the time, with the multiple concert films he's edited for Springsteen, Zimny says the music served as a guide. But the Hammersmith film posed challenges that his previous work on *Live in New York City* and *Live in Barcelona* did not: it required detective work and restoration.

The process took nearly a year to complete and began when Zimny received 16mm negatives, largely untouched for nearly 30 years, that arrived in rusting canisters from the Sony vault. Zimny transferred the fragile film to high definition tape then started matching the film with the 24-track audio. Though he had a poor-quality version of the concert that had circulated for years in the collector community he could refer to, he says much of the process was trial-and-error as he watched what the musicians were doing and matched that to the right song. He also corrected the color and digitally repaired individual frames.

Now that Springsteen has embraced video, it seems reasonable to expect archival releases in addition to the short films that have accompanied *Devils & Dust* and *We Shall Overcome*. Zimny politely declined to discuss any future projects; an Internet posting stating that a concert from Phoenix in 1978 would soon join the Hammersmith concert on DVD appears to be, at this point, just a rumor.

Speculation about upcoming projects aside, Thom Zimny's credits include work on PBS documentaries, and HBO's critically acclaimed program *The Wire*. He also recently completed Ed Burns' film, *Purple Violets*. He has worked with Bruce Springsteen for the past five years. In a late 2005 interview, Zimny and *Backstreets* associate editor Jonathan Pont discussed some of the technical challenges in completing the Hammersmith film and a bit about how he works in general.

Backstreets: How did you get involved with Bruce, and specifically with editing his long-form music video?

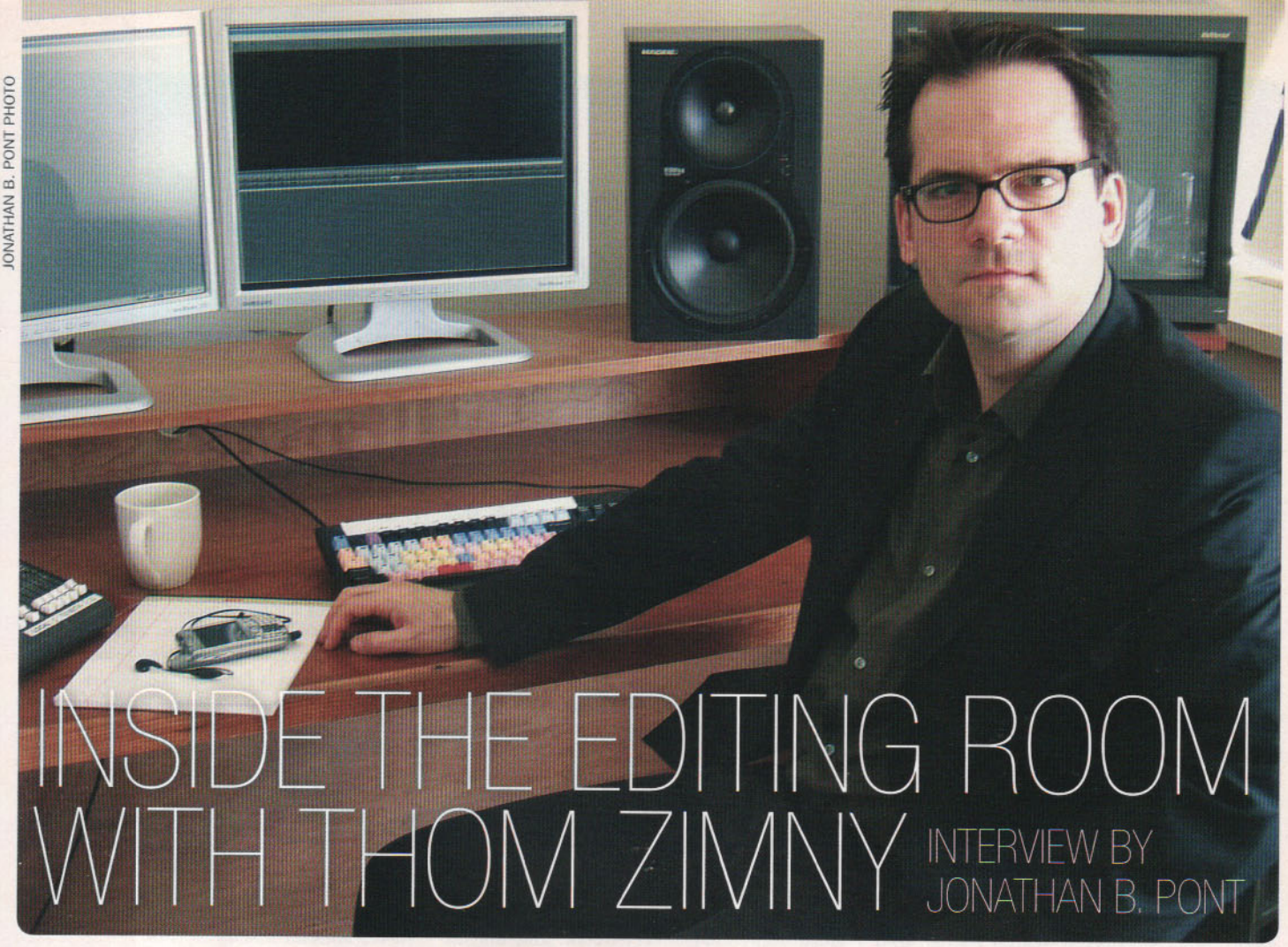
Zimny: I was a fan, and I grew up in New Jersey. I was aware of his music, and I knew Dave Marsh's books. The connection I had was through Lee Rolontz, who's now a producer at VH1 and was one of the executive producers of Storytellers. She had recommended me, and *[Blood Brothers* director] Ernie Fritz had recommended me to George Travis, to work with *[Live in New York City* director] Chris Hilson. I had known Lee from different projects. So I ended up working on *Live in New York City*.

At that point, I wasn't doing much music work; I was focusing on more narrative and documentary work. Working with Bruce's music was perfect because it combined all those elements. It has storytelling elements of narrative filmmaking. Each song is almost like a mini-movie. That's how we approached it with *Live in New York,* and *Barcelona.*

I realized right away from my conversations with Jon Landau and with Bruce that the music was going to be the focus. That was great because I could work on trying to portray the concerts in a seamless manner so that you didn't notice the editing. The editing was invisible. And what you felt was the presence of Bruce and the band, and the excitement of the show. That was an approach I found exciting at the time.

How did* Live in New York *affect what you did on* Barcelona? *Does editing Bruce with the E Street Band remain a pretty consistent experience?

Editing Bruce and the band, you have to look at the footage and absorb what's



JONATHAN B. PONT PHOTO

INSIDE THE EDITING ROOM WITH THOM ZIMNY

INTERVIEW BY JONATHAN B. PONT

being translated on the screen. Each event is different. Each camera angle is different and presents a different take on the reality of what was going on in the concert. *New York* and *Barcelona* are really different. The crowds were different, and that translates on the screen. One of the great things about *Barcelona* was that energy really came across in a few shots. We included shots of the audience, at one point, where someone is standing on somebody's shoulders. Some of those elements we really wanted to include. Whereas *Live in New York*, we all agreed the audience shots weren't part of the show at that time, in terms of what was captured. *Live in New York* has also a great energy in capturing the band at that time. I thought Chris Hilson did an amazing job on both. But with music as the focus, you don't end up with flashy crane shots, things like that. You end up with the perfect seat, where you're enjoying the show, and on stage, where you can see communication between Bruce and the band.

Cutting both, you can watch every angle and see Bruce direct the band, or maybe call out an audible and change the pace of the show. For example, in "Dancing in the Dark," one of my favorite memories was working with Jon Landau. We were watching the footage, and talking, and we decided to stay on that one camera angle because it was so beautiful. In that angle, you see Bruce go completely from one song to the next and throw out the song to the band. They change guitars, you see the chaos on the stage. We wanted to have it play out in one shot. It captured the reality and the excitement of the E Street Band and also the spontaneity of the show.

With that song, because it had such a well-known video from 1984, did it ever occur to you that you were creating a new image for it? Was that ever something you considered?

I have memories of my own experience with these songs. You acknowledge, for example, "Dancing" or "Born in the U.S.A.," that these songs have been documented in

film. You definitely account for it being a new moment. But you look at what Bruce is doing. With "Dancing in the Dark," I remember thinking it was played so much harder and stronger, and that the energy was intense. I wanted to remain faithful to that in the cutting of that song in particular. I tried to stay in sync with Bruce, is the best way to put it. But it was presenting the song in a new light.

Does editing narrative or documentary film differ from an E Street Band project from an editor's standpoint, or do you apply the same sensibilities, like "I'm looking for this"?

It's not a consistent experience. Working with the E Street Band, you have to look at what's going on in the small moments—the subtleties of what Nils Lofgren might be doing, or what Bruce is doing. Jon Landau gave me great advice: watch Bruce, and watch Bruce's eyes. That stayed in my mind. The direction and the drama are there. So I've not worked with any other band where I felt that sort of connection or intensity in terms of the edit. There are great things: each member is such a character that we just know. For example, Steve bringing out the lighter side—you cut to Steven, and it changes the tone of things. I'm a huge fan of Max's, too. You can watch Max's camera all day long because it's so great to see his work with the band. I love to get moments of Patti and Steven interacting and enjoying the music.

I want to touch on* Storytellers, *because there's no arena, no band, just Bruce. How did that have an impact on the editing?

The great thing about that when I look back is watching it with Bruce. The one thing that came across was the intimacy of the space. In some of the reverse shots, you can see the crowd as they listen. I really wanted to keep that intimacy that I experienced—not through a lot of edits, but key moments. For example, the description of "Devils & Dust," or even better, my favorite was his description of "The Rising." I'd stay on one camera for a period of time because there was no need to change. It was all there in the footage. The most important thing is to know when not to edit, but to leave something on screen. When I think of "The Rising" and *Storytellers*, I think about the editing—or more the lack of editing. That kept me personally in that space.

How are the broadcast and the DVD versions different?

I completely re-cut it, from scratch—I had to, to do the job right. I couldn't do it any other way, because I have to examine all the other angles. I couldn't really start with a broadcast version and tell Jon or Bruce "this is the best" when I haven't looked through everything. I take it all very seriously. In editing, choices can affect performance. So I wanted to take the road we've always taken, where we look at everything, and approach it with that level of detail, and make sure that the best gets used.

Bruce and Jon are the same way with the film projects that I perceive they are with the music: they cover every detail, and they're there 100 percent. And all the film projects, from details of color correct down to design and the look of it. Bruce is involved with all the aspects.

They've given me a great chance, especially with *Born to Run*, to cut with music and storytelling. It started when Barbara Carr made a suggestion around the time of *Live in New York*. I made a small featurette. I did that, and then in *Barcelona*, I did another. They were small versions, documentary style. Barbara Carr has been an essential part of every film project I've done.

What about the performances themselves? Does going to a concert have any impact on what you do later on as you're working on a film?

It does. Now when I go to shows, I watch Bruce, but I also watch the audience. I watch for silences. I get inspired: there was a moment when I was working on the *Born to Run* project, and Bruce was playing in Vancouver. That was an amazing show, but it was the first time I had heard him talk about how he lived on this block with his family.

And after I heard that, I went back and filmed Bruce's childhood house and his local church, and it's in the documentary where he talks about the importance of staying connected to where you came from. The images appear briefly, they aren't identified on screen, but I got a sense of the importance of the landscape from that show, and it carried over into the film. So I take away a lot from the shows now, besides just enjoying the music.

I went to the last night in New York, but I didn't know that I'd be editing it. I remember "The River" and the feeling of the place very clearly and tried to hold on to that when I cut it for the HBO show. When you're cutting it, you carry a lot of things with you: your memories of the music, sometimes the experience of seeing it performed, and the comments Bruce or Jon have made. But most of all you keep your eyes open, try to stay true to the moment, and let the music be the focus. I won an Emmy for the editing, and it was a great honor.

Born to Run: ***For the two films, you worked simultaneously on both.***

I worked simultaneously on *Hammersmith, L.A.* (1973), *Wings for Wheels*, cut the "Devils & Dust" music video, and produced and cut *VH1 Storytellers*, all in one period. Hammersmith was a great experience, because it was like getting a treasure chest of these great images. I was shocked to see the footage, and the beauty of the band at that time, and how powerful the playing was. It was magical to put that together and restore it. Every day there was a new camera angle, and things pieced together like a giant puzzle. I had a great team working with me..

Talk about the daily experience. You come to your studio. What's a typical day like restoring Hammersmith?

It's broken down into different sections. In the beginning, it was taking a roll of negative and transferring it to a high-definition tape, seeing what kind of shape it was in. There was a digital restoration process that happened down the road, and later, I would put all the footage into my computer and edit it. I would pick out a song, search for other angles, go through other canisters. There was one point where I found a section that was rolled up in a can that was just "Thunder Road," and it was a front shot of just Bruce, singing. I didn't have that for a long period. But I didn't give up. I went through everything: each scrap of paper had a clue.

It wasn't as if there was a road map.

No. Look at L.A. from the Ahmanson Theater in 1973, the bonus stuff. They cut it together for a three-minute promotional clip for CBS, and there was just a copy of the negative. I only had that to work with, so I synced that up by eye then restored it frame-by-frame. That was an amazing time: Bruce came in and looked at it, we color-corrected it, and I would show him different sections of how things were cleaning up. It was a great opportunity to work with the material and watch a 23- or 24-year-old Bruce perform.

Were there challenges? Had you done that sort of restoration before?

No. I had a team of people working with me. The real thing with Hammersmith, because there weren't so many cameras, I took a different approach to cutting. It has this quality where you have a camera behind Roy, and it's moving, but it's a perspective that's hard to get now. Plus, the cameramen didn't really know these songs. They were new songs. They were connected to the music, and that makes Hammersmith a great document. You capture the band at this crucial time, it's all been filmed that in way took away from the performance possibly, with the camera moving around a lot, but it's beautifully shot. I tried to stay in the zone with the editing where you let moments play out, like Bruce and Clarence looking at each other during "She's the One." Or the embrace after "Thunder Road," then getting ready for the next song. The pacing didn't tighten up: things didn't move faster. We let everything play out in real time. It's the true document of the night.

One thing we've talked about was that the Hammersmith film constituted, as you described it, the "best representation" of that time. Is that from a technical standpoint, or a performance standpoint?

I think from a technical standpoint, this caught it. People have talked about different things: the Roxy, the Bottom Line....

Do these really exist?

Footage does exist, yes. But they really never were up for consideration. This was definitely the show.

So when you compared them, what about the Hammersmith caused you to say, if you will, "this is our horse, and these are the reasons why"?

Simply because it was captured in 16mm film with angles that represented a view of the band that wouldn't be limited. The quality of the filmmaking, that's the best way I can put it.

***How did that carry over into* Wings for Wheels?**

I didn't want to have it be a series of talking heads with various clips from throughout the years. I wanted to stay in '75.

I had a great conversation with Jon and Bruce, talking about some of the studio moments. They were laughing, and I realized I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I knew what I *didn't* want to do: have them sitting in a chair, very formal, strict VH1-style directing where they couldn't just talk. I was much more interested in having this feel like you're having this conversation with Bruce, the band, and the people responsible for making the album. My approach was the story should unfold, and that it was a journey. Bruce is in the car, and he's going back. I wanted to keep away from stills that I had seen. I tracked down Barbara Pyle and went through her archive. Greg Linn from Sony gave access to archival materials from the *Born to Run* era. Greg was a great help in developing the project with his team at Sony. Bruce and Jon were into the idea that we're going to present things you never thought you would see: images of the band in the studio, for example.

That's why I put them in the Sony studio where they didn't really have an idea of what was going to be played. The documentary, when they hear "Born to Run" for the first time in 30 years, they didn't have a clue that was going to come over the speakers. That was exciting to capture their stories, their reactions. It's of the moment, and that's what I wanted to get out of the filmmaking process: their spontaneity and true response to the music.

Toby Scott was a great help, because he gave me all the *Born to Run* sessions on a hard drive. I ended up listening to that for a month and figured out the film that way in the editing room. I would listen to certain .wav [files] of "Born to Run" where it would just be the acoustic guitar and electric guitar, and that would be one theme. The bass and the guitar from "Backstreets" was another theme for me.

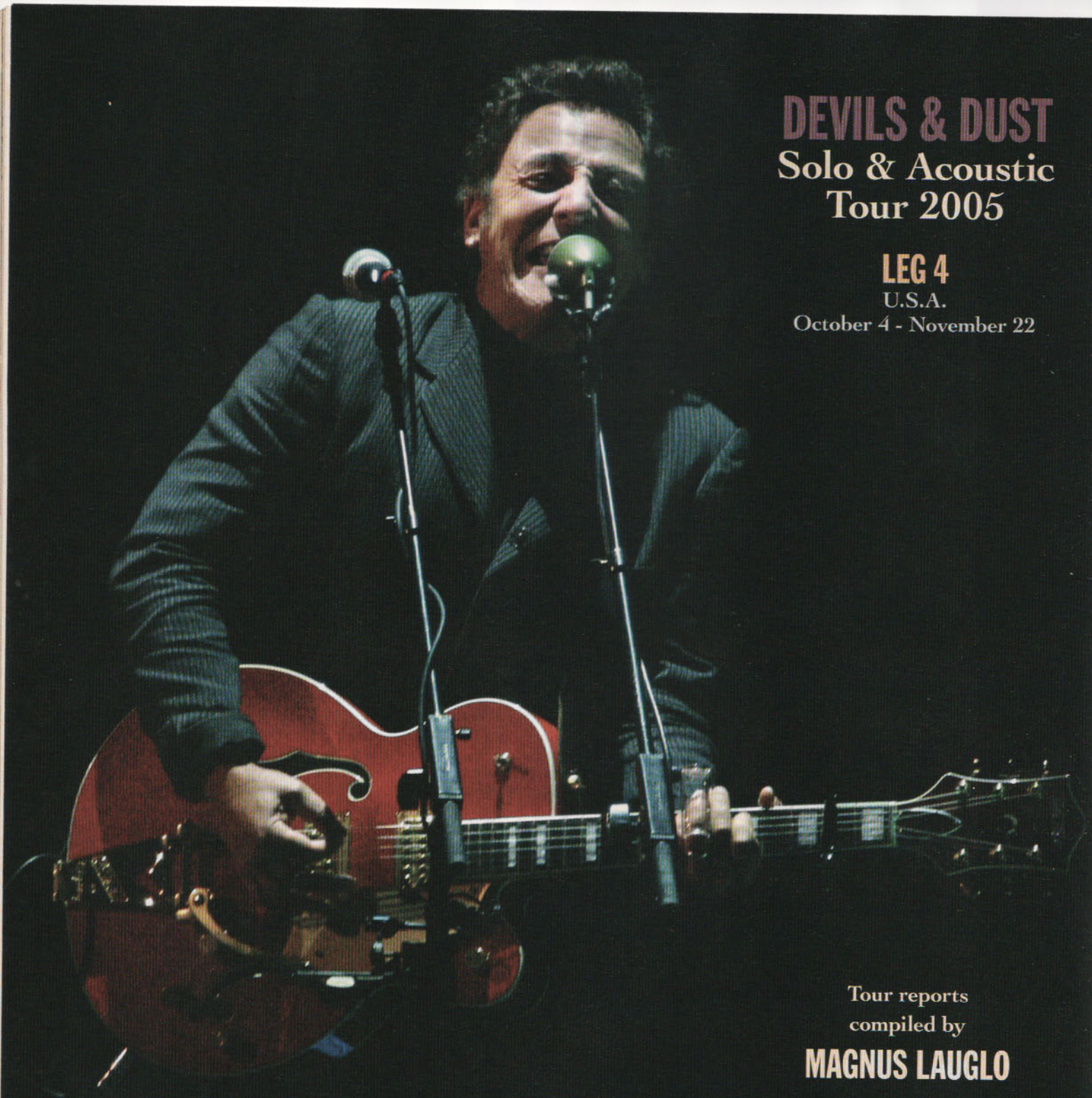
I started to hear things in the music and started to categorize them in terms of what they felt like: this was the conflict; this was the resolution; this was Jon and Bruce. That friendship had that "Backstreets" feeling to me, with the piano. So all this became new songs in a way, and helped me work out a soundtrack that gave fans another take on the songs, but also explained the story of making *Born to Run*.

I had an important conversation with Bruce where we talked about the songs. I had run a where I had put the songs underneath people talking. But they were so powerful you didn't want people talking over them. I said I'd like to explore pulling away some of the elements, and he was into that idea and supportive of exploring the music that way.

The thing I love about the old footage is that you see Bruce's struggle and frustration, and his determination. That's better than five people telling the story. It demonstrates it. And I used different formats: I shot it in 16mm, HD, Super 8 and DV video so it would have a texture, and at times evoke feeling and memory. I would slow things down, so when Bruce is making eye contact, or appears exhausted, you see it. That's one thing I tried to acknowledge: this music is in a lot of lives, and part of our DNA.

Of all the things in* Wings for Wheels, *is there anything that stands out for you, a favorite moment?

I liked the moments that were captured, where Bruce played the guitar on "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," or played the piano introductions. I also liked working on the ending. I love the imagery of a current Bruce and a younger Bruce putting on the headphones. With those, you see the dedication to the craft, and that this is a job he isn't stopping. It's a journey he's still taking. And I think his last comment captures this. He says it at the end the best, in the diner. I remember seeing that moment and saying, that's the end of the movie. That was the first edit, right there.



DEVILS & DUST
Solo & Acoustic Tour 2005

LEG 4
U.S.A.
October 4 - November 22

Tour reports
compiled by
MAGNUS LAUGLO

ALONE AGAIN

OCTOBER 4
PARAMOUNT THEATRE
ASBURY PARK, NJ

SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Living Proof**/Devils & Dust/The Ties That Bind/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Be True***/Tougher Than the Rest*/Ain't Got You/All the Way Home/One Step Up/Reno/Atlantic City*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/Galveston Bay/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)***/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Thundercrack"
NOTES: After a seven-week break from touring, Bruce Springsteen returns to the Paramount Theatre stage for a rehearsal show, to warm up for the last leg of the *Devils & Dust* tour. The 1,600-seat theater is the smallest venue of the tour. Proceeds from this show, his first since Hurricane Katrina, are donated to the Jersey Coast Chapter of the American Red Cross. Bruce speaks with fondness about New Orleans as "the birthplace of American music... It's one of the few places that's kept its dirtiness and grittiness and soul... And it's a real big piece of who we are." Seemingly a comment on those recent catastrophic events along the Gulf Coast was the tour premiere of "Idiot's Delight," a song he co-wrote with Joe Grushecky (which was released on Grushecky's *Coming Home*), sung into the bullet mic. Springsteen also debuts "The Ties that Bind," "I Wanna Marry You" (on ukulele) ,and "Atlantic City." "The Hitter" sits out for the first time on the tour, replaced by "Galveston Bay."
IN THE AUDIENCE: Bruce's mother (who is reportedly in the lounge when he first gives her a shout-out from the stage) and aunts.
HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: "Idiot's Delight" was expertly rendered, a twisted version with twang and echo—somewhat of an extraterrestrial re-take of the "Mannish Boy" stomp of the "Reason to Believe," which it essentially replaced in the set. "Living Proof" was powerful on the pump organ, whereas other songs rendered on this instrument have been drained of life. For the still-ravaged venue location, I found "Sandy" to be more elegy than love song, kiss off, or summer treat. In keeping with the now more somber mood, this one seemed sadder than ever.

All in all, the show was not without highlights, but I felt that things lagged at times. I didn't expect a radical re-working of the show, but if the opening eight or so tracks were pretty thrilling in their diversity and rhythm, then the next couple of segments tread on more familiar terrain. It was, after all, a rehearsal, and a very enjoyable one at that. While I may have a hankering for Bruce to strap on the Fender and rock again, the show remains special, and I think this is a format Bruce will come back to more often as he moves into an older age he made no pretense of hiding on this good night.
—Bill Kenney

YOU CAN LAUGH!: The incredible, almost melodically unrecognizable, reworked version of "The Ties That Bind" was mesmerizing, with a melody line that was reminiscent of some late '70s outtakes. There was a lot of falsetto, and it was simply wonderful to hear the tour premiere of this gem.

There was much less banter and chat in the first half of the show than previously on the tour, especially when compared to the April rehearsals. But as he walked out for the encore strumming the ukulele, he paused to take in the consternation around him, giggled, and said, "You can laugh!" "I Wanna Marry You" was brilliant, sounding lovely like this. And the final icing on the cake was hearing "Sandy," just yards from where the action in the song takes place. *—Karl Birthistle*

OCTOBER 6
BLUE CROSS ARENA
ROCHESTER, NY

SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Living Proof**/Devils & Dust/My Father's House/Long Time Comin'/Independence Day***/Two Faces*/Ain't Got You/Maria's Bed/Cautious Man/Reno/Nothing Man***/Real World*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/Two Hearts/Galveston Bay/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/The Ties That Bind/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)" and "Used Cars"
NOTES: Tour premiere "Independence Day" is played following "My Father's House" and "Long Time Comin'," a fatherhood trifecta. "The Promised Land" is dedicated to the recently deceased champion of folk music, Harold Leventhal.
SYSTEM OF A DOWNER: "Independence Day" seemed to catch the crew off guard, as they did not have the electric piano set up yet. Bruce stood from the piano and playfully picked up the end of the downstage end of the electric piano and began sliding it to the playing position next to the grand. The crew quickly came to his aid and, for at least a moment or two, it was like watching Bruce set up in his living room. "I've got to keep these guys honest," Bruce said as the crew took over and got set. He announced that this song would be, in fact, "a tour first. Which is funny because I've played about 120 songs on the tour. Which means that you are going to miss about 100 of them. But don't worry, I've picked the twenty best songs for tonight." He then made a gesture of mock concentration, putting this fingers to his temples and contemplating, "Yes, I've got a ... system!" This drew a big laugh from the crowd and lightened the tone considerably. He then launched into a heartfelt and slow-paced electric piano rendition of "Independence Day." *—Paul Carter*

OCTOBER 7
HARTFORD CIVIC CENTER
HARTFORD, CT

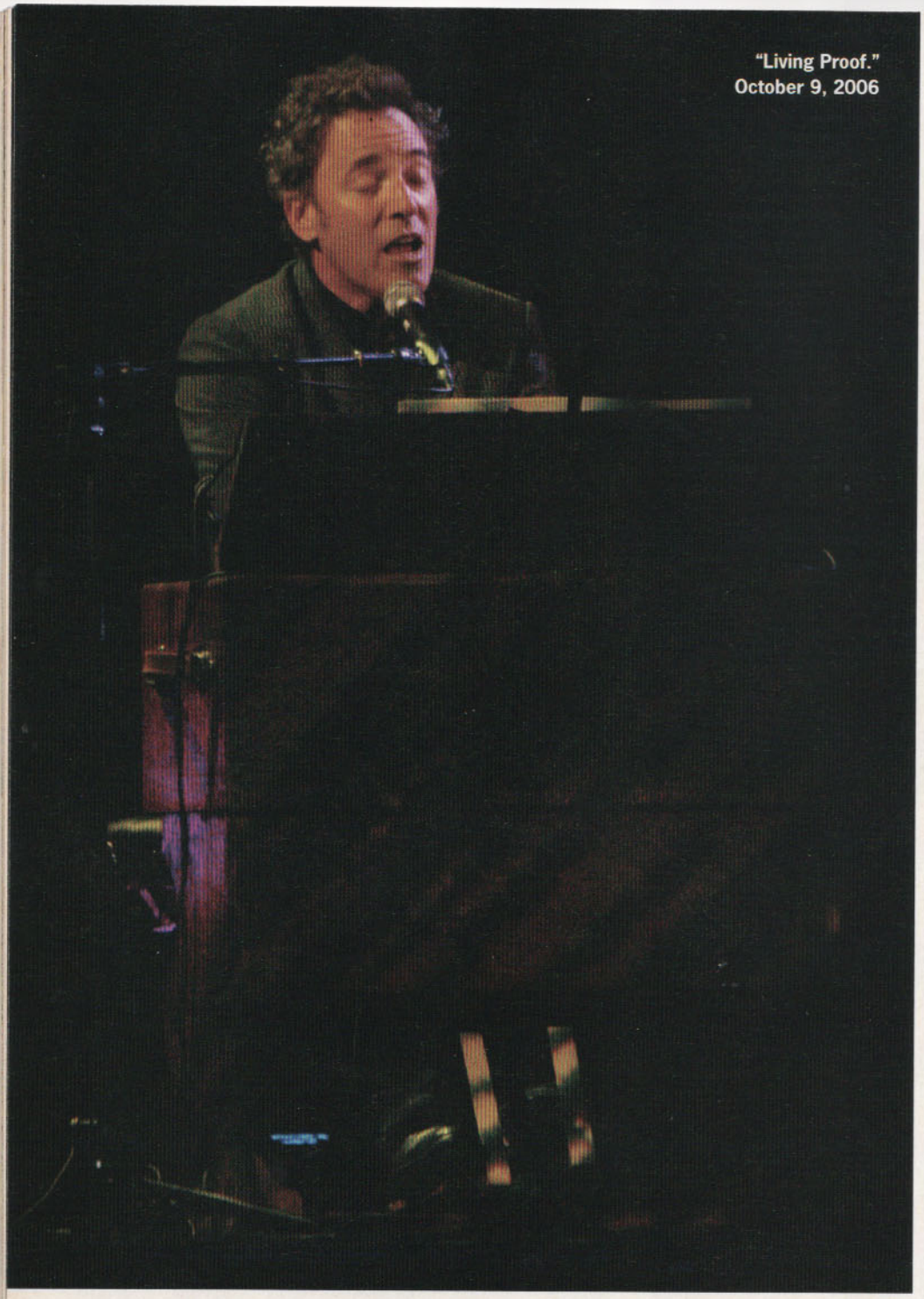
SETLIST: Back in Your Arms***/Wreck on the Highway***/Idiot's Delight/Devils & Dust/The Ties That Bind/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Incident on 57th Street*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Part Man Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Something in the Night/Reno/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Lost in the Flood*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)*/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Something in the Night"
NOTES: Two electric piano numbers open this longest show yet, with more than half the set changing up from the previous night. The 27-song set includes two tour premieres: "You Can Look" on piano, and "Something in the Night" on guitar by request. Plus the return of "The Hitter," and piano versions of chestnuts "Incident" and "Lost in the Flood," both to tremendous ovations.
ROCKED BACK INSIDE MY HEART: I've been to many shows, but this one was special. I wasn't sure what to expect. I heard so many comments about how these shows are not "the same Bruce." Well this wasn't, and I'm thrilled! Every note, every chord, seemed to be deep in him and it became obvious to me that this is Bruce at his most raw, natural best. He touched my soul as usual, but this was different. This is a must-see for real fans who appreciate the man for who he is—all of him. Not just the world's best live performer who rocks us out of our seats. He rocked me this time, but from deep inside myself. The intimacy I experienced from his words, his demeanor and his music is something I will always treasure. *—Jeannie Fino*

OCTOBER 9
NASSAU VETERANS MEMORIAL COLISEUM
UNIONDALE, NY

SETLIST: Stolen Car***/Idiot's Delight/Living Proof**/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Back in Your Arms***/Two Faces*/Johnny 99/All I'm Thinkin' About/Ain't Got You/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Lost in the Flood*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/The Ties That Bind/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

Left: "Idiot's Delight" at Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, NY, October 9. (Photo by John Griffin)

KEY
★ grand piano
★★ pump organ
★★★ electric piano
★★★★ banjitar
★★★★★ ukulele
autoharp
Tour premiere



"Living Proof."
October 9, 2006

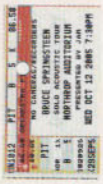
JOHN GRIFFIN PHOTO

NOTES: No tour premieres, but a nicely varied set, with the first nine songs coming from eight different albums, including "Stolen Car" to open, and the return of the bullet mic version of "Johnny 99" for the first time since the beginning of the tour.

VIEW FROM THE NOSEBLEEDS: Not being too familiar with the format of the *Devils & Dust* tour, I was surprised that Bruce would choose to do an acoustic show in such a large arena. Nassau isn't the most inviting place, but once the lights went down, it seemed more personal. Another problem with Nassau is the acoustics. From where I was sitting (up in the 300s) the sound was good, but not great. The bullet mic was a bit of a distraction as well, and it took me a while to recognize "Johnny 99." For the most part the crowd around me was indifferent. Some people were totally into the show, while others spent a good portion talking and complaining about how it "wasn't a Springsteen concert." That aside, I loved it and wish he would come out to Long Island more often. I can't believe it's been 25 years since the New Year's show in '80. I'm getting old! —*Tim Buksa*

NEW YEAR'S AMNESIA: Bruce has a weird history in Nassau Coliseum. This is the site of the longest show he's ever played, but he never seems to have any recollection of having been there before. Granted, it is a faceless hockey arena with lousy acoustics, but he has played there nine times. With the exception of the New Year's shows in 1980, these performances are all kind of forgettable, and some are certainly sub-par. It just seems odd that even Hartford gets special nights, whereas Nassau shows often seem like he's nowhere near the bulk of his fan base. I've always wondered why Nassau has never seemed as important as the Philly Spectrum or the Hartford Civic Center. How can a place so close to home be so marginal for Bruce? He mentioned how Long Island is very similar to New Jersey ["The other side of the same tragic coin... You scratch a Long Islander, and there's a New Jerseyan under there"]. But by and large, very little occurs at a Nassau show that you talk about years later. —*Robert Bader*

OCTOBER 12
NORTHROP AUDITORIUM
MINNEAPOLIS, MN



SETLIST: Wreck on the Highway***/Idiot's Delight/Into the Fire**/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Back in Your Arms***/For You*/Johnny 99/All I'm Thinkin' About/Ain't Got You/One Step Up/Reno/Nothing Man***/Thunder Road*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/The Ties That Bind/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: In one of the smaller venues of this last leg, Springsteen offers up a one-off of "Thunder Road"—the very song he had vowed that he wouldn't play before the tour began. "The New Timer" is played for the first time since the *Tom Joad* tour. The stage rush is foiled twice, with security turning rushers back to their seats after both "Matamoros Banks" and "The Promised Land."

PROMISES WILL BE BROKEN: About halfway through the show, Bruce mentioned there are some songs "that need a rest for awhile," and that he hadn't played this song on this tour yet, but was playing it for his "special friend J.J." I later found out that J.J. is a brave and courageous young man who is battling leukemia, and he had the honor of meeting Bruce before the show and seeing the soundcheck. Then, for the only time on the tour, Bruce pulled out what is probably his most memorable opening song from any album: "Thunder Road." The crowd erupted after hearing just the first few chords, and when it was finished gave the loudest round of applause of the night.

Yet another tour premiere was in the wings for this grateful Minnesota crowd. Bruce mentioned that several songs from the *Joad* album were inspired by a wonderful book titled *Journey To Nowhere* by Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson, and then played "The New Timer" on the autoharp.

Later, Springsteen broke out a ukulele for "I Wanna Marry You," and toyed with the lyrics: "I'd be proud if you would wear my name... hyphenated," which drew a chuckle from the audience.

Definitely one of the better performances I've seen from Bruce, with or without the band.
—*Daniel Baldassare*

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

Part Two

TOM GARDNER PHOTO

UKULELE

I Wanna Marry You / Growin' Up, / Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?

DEBUT: October 4, Asbury Park, NJ

Here's the truth: the ukulele is not from Hawaii. It wasn't invented there—it's actually Portuguese. Brought to Honolulu in 1879 by Portuguese immigrants looking for work in the sugar cane fields, the *braguinha*, as it was then known, enraptured the native Hawaiians who were amazed by the speed and dexterity of the musician's fingers who played it. They said the flying fingers looked like "jumping fleas," which in Hawaiian translates into *ukulele*.

Enough of the quick history lesson. All right, one more: Don Ho wasn't and isn't a ukulele master. (I had to get that out of the way.) But Jack Johnson is.

Johnson turned Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder onto the "uke" while Vedder was surfing in Hawaii. The self-taught Vedder in turn gave a uke to his mentor Bruce Springsteen at the Seattle stop of the *Devils & Dust* tour, the penultimate stop of the summer swing. And the rest is tiny guitar history—Springsteen played Eddie's gift at every show on the fall leg.

Here's Vedder on his love affair with the uke:

"I had taken some time in the islands to write some lyrics. I had a dozen songs that needed words, and I was not allowed to pick up the guitar and come up with another piece of music that needed words. I was forbidden. So I do have some type of self-discipline in my life—this is an example.

"I wasn't allowing myself to pick up a guitar, I couldn't have any more music to work on. But I saw this ukulele in the corner of the room, and I thought, 'Well, that technically isn't a guitar... so I am allowed to pick that up.'

"The first song that I wrote on it was 'Soon Forget.' We have a song called 'Can't Keep,' which on ukulele is really aggressive—a thrash ukulele song about suicide *[laughs]*.

"On the ukulele there are ways to find melody on it in a way that a guitar doesn't allow you to do. You have these extra strings, and the way they are tuned.... on the guitar it clouds the issue of melody. That was a really strong tool for me, as well as Johnny Ramone drilling onto my head the importance of melody and structure.

"So, the ukulele, it's been a huge writing tool. I gave one to Springsteen, and he said that he hadn't had one before. It was really great—as we were talking, he was just playing it the whole time as we were sitting there, and I don't think he hit a bad note."

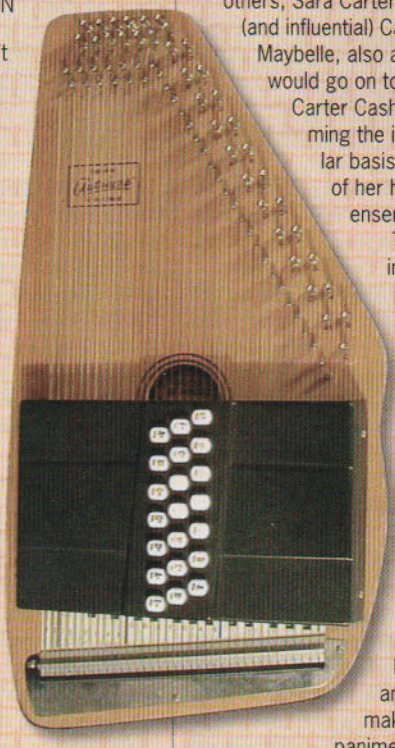
—Tim Donnelly

AUTOHARP

The New Timer

DEBUT: October 12, Minneapolis, MN

The banjo—er, banjitar—wasn't the only instrument featured on the *Devils & Dust* tour that would serve as a harbinger of projects to come. Making a late appearance was the autoharp, which Springsteen played at half of the fall leg shows for the deep cut from *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, "The New Timer." While the instrument may not appear on *We Shall Overcome*, Pete Seeger's brother, Mike, has championed the autoharp consistently in his own career, and his style on the instrument is considered influential.

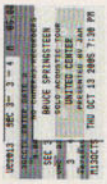


The autoharp, a stringed instrument also known as the fretless zither, has its history in German traditional music: it was most likely invented by August Gutter of Markneukirchen, Germany, a city known for its production of musical instruments. Its first American producer (and patent-owner) was a gentleman named Charles F. Zimmerman, whose name would become most associated with the instrument as its chief marketer and distributor, starting around 1885 in Pennsylvania. By the early 1900s, the autoharp had made its way further South, becoming associated with folk and hillbilly music, and would grow to prominence in the hands of, among others, Sara Carter of the immensely popular (and influential) Carter Family. Sara's cousin Maybelle, also a member of the group, would go on to give birth to the late June Carter Cash, who was known for strumming the instrument on a fairly regular basis, sometimes as a member of her husband Johnny's touring ensemble.

Though the autoharp comes in a few different styles, it basically works by pressing a chord bar or button, which in turn mutes all of the strings not needed to form the desired chord. The apparent ease of learning the instrument, and its comparatively low price, led to its popularity in the folk music world, with which it continues to be identified to this day through the work of contemporary players. Its eerily simplistic sounds and everyman accessibility make it the perfect accompaniment for "The New Timer"'s backdrop of hobo jungles and ridin' the rails, and its placement in the later shows on the *Devils & Dust* tour pointed towards a greater exploration of the folk music tradition for the Boss.

—John Howie, Jr.

OCTOBER 13
UNITED CENTER
CHICAGO, IL



SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Living Proof**/Devils & Dust/The Ties That Bind/Long Time Comin'/I Wish I Were Blind***/Tougher Than the Rest*/Johnny 99/State Trooper/All I'm Thinkin' About/Ain't Got You/Highway Patrolman/Reno/When You're Alone***/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City," "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)," and "Johnny 99"

NOTES: The home of the ultimate *Devils & Dust* debut ("Dream Baby Dream" on 5/11/05), gets no tour premieres the second time around, but a solid show nonetheless. After the stage rush was stopped in its tracks in Minneapolis, fans are again allowed close to the stage towards the end of the show.

HITTING THE HIGH NOTES: By the time the *Devils & Dust* tour made its second pass through Chicago, Bruce had dropped his request for quiet at outset of the show. He opened with "Idiot's Delight" on the bullet microphone and guitar, which prompted a lot of puzzled looks in the crowd. It was an interesting choice. All the songs he sings in that style are difficult if not impossible to decipher, much less one that is so obscure. But somehow, it worked! His cadence was such that the lyrics were recognizable. To my ear it was a stiff jab at Bush Administration for its bungling of the Hurricane Katrina relief effort.

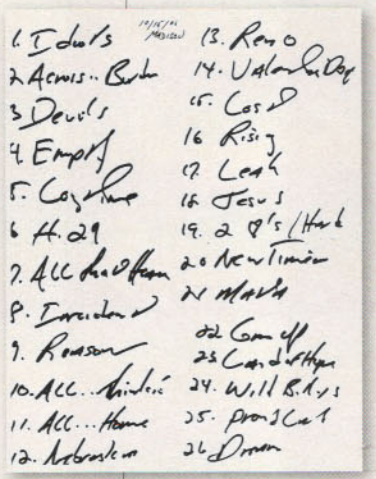
Before starting "All I'm Thinkin' About" he stepped up to the microphone and said, "Let me see if I got that voice," and then gave his falsetto a short test run. Apparently convinced he could get through it, he started singing. His voice squeaked several times early on, which made him giggle a little bit. Then he got to the line, "Brown eyed girl, I turned my back on you..." and his voice simply vanished. He croaked, "I turned my ba... I turned my ba... I turned my ba..." until it finally came out "I turned my back on you...." He got a huge round of applause for pushing through it.

"The New Timer" on autoharp was utterly riveting. There was *zero* sound in the arena other than his voice and the instrument. This is a classic "hurt song" as in the folk tradition—songs told in the first person that just get bleaker and bleaker as the story progresses. His voice was so full of emotion it felt as though he was telling his own story. It is a masterpiece and will be one of the most enduring memories of this tour for me. —*Marya Morris*

OCTOBER 15
DANE COUNTY ARENA
AT ALLIANT ENERGY CENTER
MADISON, WI

SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Across the Border**/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Incident on 57th Street*/Reason to Believe/All I'm Thinkin' About/Ain't Got You/Nebraska/Reno/Valentine's Day*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Land of Hope and Dreams/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/Wild Billy's Circus Story/Blinded By the Light/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: One year after appearing at a "Fresh Start for America" rally in Madison, Springsteen returns to play his first actual concert there in nearly 25 years, since 2/2/81. He apologized for having taken so long to come back, and even promised to return with the E Street Band. "When? If I knew, I wouldn't be me." "Blinded By the Light" is an audible in the encore, played instead of "Land of Hope and Dreams."



KISS KISS BANG BANG: For the first six or seven songs his pacing could best be described as pell mell. No breaks, no talking between songs. Just bang, bang, bang. I expected that for the first few songs, but not six or seven. With the possible exception of "Devils & Dust," there wasn't a straight interpretation to any song in his catalog, which kept me riveted throughout the show.

There were more comments about fans (obsessive or otherwise) than I ever recall. Bruce sharing pictures of his German semi-stalker atop various summits with a Bruce banner was different. The camera operators were obviously clued in, because close-ups of the pictures were provided on the big screen monitors as Bruce shuffled through them on stage. I loved how during "The Promised Land"—after the stage rush—you could virtually hear a pin drop. Such command. —*Bill King II*

HAVIN' A (SEX) PARTY: Great intimate location (though not quite sold out), rural setting with Midwestern values, and a Saturday night with a full moon all converge for a great night, and a show that really can not be measured simply by the set list. Bruce was very verbal, at times dirty, with a few more Minnesota Viking sex party references. But the best parts were the surprises at the end of the show and the fact that the crowd was on its feet for the last five songs. Very spontaneous, and very, very special. —*Eric Field*

OCTOBER 20
DCU CENTER
WORCESTER, MA

SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Across the Border**/Devils & Dust/Long Time Comin'/Sinaloa Cowboys/The Fever***/The Promise*/Johnny 99/All I'm Thinkin' About/Brilliant Disguise/I'm on Fire****/Reno/When You're Alone***/Racing in the Street*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks// I Wanna Marry You*****/Waitin' on a Sunny Day/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: Tour premiere "The Fever" on the electric piano is dedicated "To Southside, wherever you are!" Other rarities include "The Promise," "Lost in the Flood," "Sinaloa Cowboys," and "Brilliant Disguise." Springsteen chastises the clap-happy Worcester crowd, but in the encore, he takes advantage of the rambunctious, participatory vibe and breaks out "Waitin' on a Sunny Day."

ICEMAN?...: The Worcester show was pretty dark, and Bruce appeared cranky and surly. He introduced "The Fever" with, "I'm going to play one of those annoying fan favorites that someone requested." If he intended that to be funny (and he wasn't laughing as far as I could see), it didn't come off that way; it had a hard edge to it. The songs seemed connected by themes of loneliness, despair and broken dreams. While I understand that isn't exactly a news bulletin, it almost seemed that he was expressing his own feelings rather than those of his characters, and those feelings were of something stressful and serious, as if the weight of the world were on his shoulders. It was palpable in the way he sang the songs, and perceptible in the rare songs he chose to bring out. For the first half of the show he had talked very little, and when he did, and the monologues seemed

forced and uninspired. Yet when he told the story to introduce "Jesus..." his mood seemed to brighten a bit, sort of as if he knew he was getting to the songs of hope that he did in the encore. *—Jeff Metzger*

...OR HOT & SEXY?: It was as if Worcester had waited since the *Tunnel of Love Express Tour* [which opened here on 2/25/88] for the lost son to come back—the crowd was very animated and passionate. Even before the concert started, there was a lot of excitement in the building. Yet the performance itself was one of those where you just sit completely captivated and hang on every word. One of my favorites among the rarer songs was "Sinaloa Cowboys." It was just a beautiful song for this type of show—it came alive a lot more than on the album. The show also had a "hot and sexy" feel to it. I am generally not a big fan of "The Fever" and "I'm on Fire," which I know were the highlights for many fans, but they just fit this particular evening and I enjoyed them a lot. *—Brigitte Tersek*

OCTOBER 21
DUNKIN' DONUTS CENTER
PROVIDENCE, RI

SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Across the Border**/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/For You*/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)*/The River*/Reason to Believe/Nebraska/Part Man Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Reno/Valentine's Day*/Real World*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/Atlantic City/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "The Fever," "Living Proof," and "You Can Look"

NOTES: Playing to a quieter crowd tonight, Bruce returns to songs that characterized earlier portions of the tour, revisits his early stories, and gives the electric piano a rest for the night. "Atlantic City," which had only one previous tour performance on the keys, is played tonight on guitar and harmonica.

GOOD TIMES: The Providence show felt like we were spending the evening with a good friend who just happened to be perhaps the greatest artist of his generation. Bruce was in a chatty and funny mood. "Valentine's Day" sent chills down my spine, and I didn't think it could be topped—until he sat down a few glorious songs later, placed an autoharp on his lap, and performed "The New Timer," strumming the strings and pulling a sound so ethereal and sad out of the instrument it was unlike anything I have ever heard before. If I had to pick *the moment* from Providence, this would have to be it. I cried. *—Ellie Deegan*

PORKY'S REVENGE: In contrast to Worcester, the Providence show got the loose, chatty, energetic Bruce. The weight of the previous night, whatever it was, seemed to be lifted. There was less introspection and more intensity. Listening to "Nebraska," I felt as if Starkweather was truly being channeled. "Atlantic City" worked as a surprising but much-appreciated treat in the encores. Bruce also went back to singing love songs as he did during the first leg of the tour, creating a far different mood than the night before. "Valentine's Day" was dedicated to the Landaus [manager Jon and his daughter Kate; Bruce said, "I wrote this song for her daddy when she came along"] and was followed by a standing ovation that Bruce not only visibly embraced but basically encouraged. And, most enjoyably, his sense of humor was back, both in the way in which he told the canned stories and in a few ad libs. Expanding the introduction to "Part Man Part Monkey": "Fucking is outlawed; it was added onto a Congressional pork bill." *—Jeff Metzger*

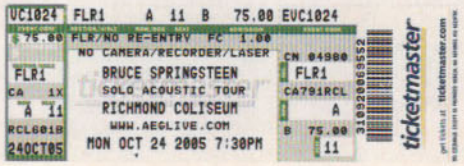
PATRICK BONNARD PHOTO

OCTOBER 24
RICHMOND COLISEUM
RICHMOND, VA

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)*/The River*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Johnny 99/Part Man Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Reno/Nothing Man***/Incident on 57th Street*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: A back-to-basics set regarded by many fans as a rehearsal for the upcoming Boston shows, though Springsteen goes heavier on his early material here in his Steel Mill-era home away from home. Richmond, Bruce says, was "a place without which I could not have survived. There were two places we played—here and Jersey. I'm not sure what the connection was, but it kept us alive for quite a while there."

IN THE AUDIENCE: Bruce Hornsby, who Springsteen calls out to during a rousing "You Can Look" on piano: "Look over your shoulder, Hornsby! Fear for your day job, brother!"



TOP 10 TOUR RECORDINGS

1. August 7, Milwaukee, WI
Great recording with a great performance of a great set list. If the opening "Shut Out the Light" didn't floor you, "Frankie" into "Back in Your Arms" certainly did. And an encore-opening "Open All Night"? Wow.

2. July 31, Columbus, OH
The tour peaked the last part of July and the first week of August, and this excellent recording from Neo captures everything in fine form.

3. August 3, Grand Rapids, MI
Yes, another show from that stretch, but they all warrant inclusion. The only tour performance of "Tunnel of Love," plus "Sherry Darling" and "Saint in the City." First posted to dimeadozen, then released by Crystal Cat on silver discs.

4. June 25, Stockholm, SWE
"Songs from the Steamroom" included "Walk Like a Man," "The Promise," and "Across the Border." Plus the traditional Swedish drinking song "Helan Gar." From the Cat.

5. June 20, Paris, FRA
Another from the Cat, and probably the best-sounding show featuring "Real World." Actually, that is the reason this one is included: "Real World." Plus the one-off performance of "Better Days," with Elliot Murphy, natch.... and did we mention the amazing version of "Real World"?

6. May 15, Cleveland, OH
A solo piano "Incident" and the banjo arrangement of "I'm on Fire" highlight this standout from Neo, the definitive recording from the first leg of the tour.

7. May 11, Chicago, IL
A broken string during "Land of Hope and Dreams" leads to the most spontaneous moment of the tour, as an a cappella verse sends shivers down the spine.

8. Nov. 8, Philadelphia, PA
Nicky C's recording is one of the best of the tour, and with a set list full of *River* nuggets, including the first "Drive All Night" in more than 24 years, it's a great one to have captured in its full beauty.

9. Nov. 17, E. Rutherford, NJ
If it's good enough for Sirius' "Live Thunder," it's good enough for us. With the first acoustic "Born to Run" in nearly 17 years, dedicated to Don Ienner and the people at Sony.

10. Nov. 22, Trenton, NJ
Okay, we admit it, we're suckers for tour-closing shows. But with four tour debuts, plus the late-tour highlights "Drive All Night" and "Thundercrack," this one deserves mention.

—Flynn McLean

FEELS LIKE THE FIRST TIME: The Richmond show was a throwback, more similar to the ones I'd seen on the first leg of the tour than the two shows I'd caught in North Carolina this summer. This concert was my 32nd, but my girlfriend's first. Knowing that she had yet to be won over, I was hoping Bruce would be loose, mixing up some comedy and songs my girlfriend would be familiar with. As it turned out, the show was representative of the entire tour and made for a good first concert.

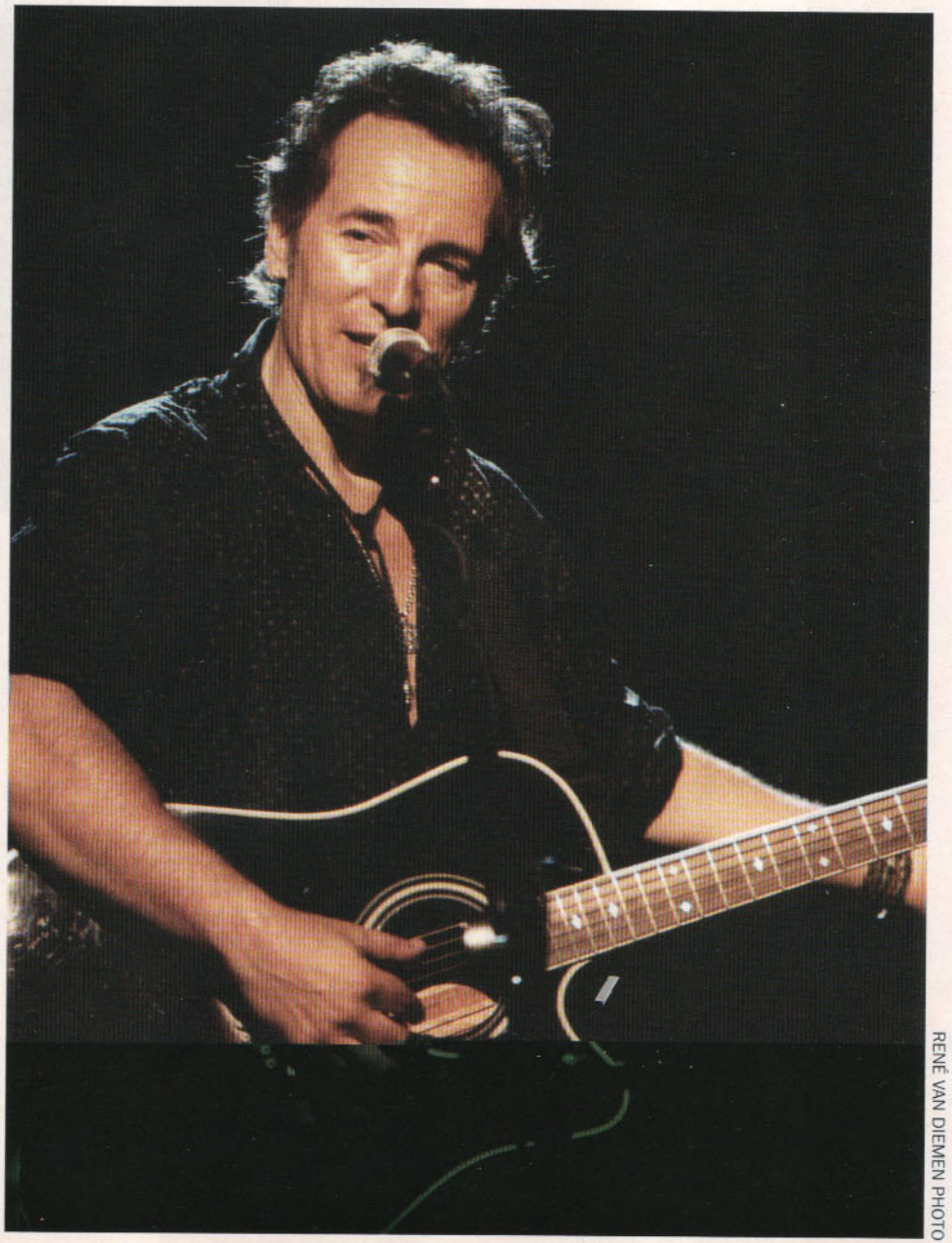
"Tougher Than the Rest" had the most personal impact, as my girlfriend and I had been going out for just two months when we went to this show—pretty much at the "Tougher Than The Rest" stage of a relationship.

"The New Timer" on the autoharp was a surprising highlight. The instrumentation highlighted the lyrics and introduced me to a great story in a way that the album version never did. The trade-off, however, was that Springsteen looked ridiculous. I can take the pump organ, piano, and floorboard, but at some point one of Bruce's advisors should have said, "You're Bruce Springsteen, damn it; you just can't play that."

I had no idea what he was going to play when he sat down at the electric piano for "Sandy." A few notes into it, however, my mouth was agape and my girlfriend was laughing at me. I hadn't heard this one live before, and, coupled with "Incident," it made a great throwback to a city that was so important to Springsteen's earlier years. *—Zach Everson*

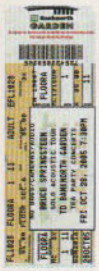
OCTOBER 28, 30
T.D. BANKNORTH GARDEN
BOSTON, MA

10/28 SETLIST: Idiot's Delight/Living Proof**/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)*/The River*/Tougher



RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

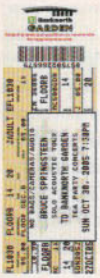
RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO



Than the Rest*/Johnny 99/Part Man Part Monkey/Ain't Got You/Reno/Nothing Man***/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

10/28 NOTES: Both Boston shows are professionally filmed with multiple cameras. Perhaps as a result, the setlists are atypically standard (particularly for a two-night stand in an East Coast Springsteen stronghold), highlighting songs that have characterized the whole tour. Springsteen allows himself some deviation, with "Ain't Got You" and "Lucky Town" called as audibles. "All That Heaven Will Allow" is dedicated to longtime fan Obie; "Matamoros Banks" to the *Boston Globe's* Stan Grossfeld. In all, a strangely lethargic Bruce, sound imperfections, and few surprises in the setlist make for a disappointing first night.

CAMERA SHY?: The first night in Boston lacked electricity, and after promising versions of "Idiot's Delight" and "Living Proof," the show lost its way. Bruce seemed self-conscious and a little off-kilter, perhaps due to the presence of the additional cameras. After some meandering, the show never regained its early momentum. All the same, a rousing "Ain't Got You" stuck out like the nugget it was. *—Gregory Denny*



10/30 SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/Back in Your Arms***/For You*/Johnny 99/State Trooper/All I'm Thinkin' About/Cautious Man/Reno/Lost in the Flood*/Real World*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/Open All Night/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dirty Water/Dream Baby Dream**

10/30 NOTES: With cameras still rolling, night two features a 27-song set with only ten songs repeated from the previous night, an intense performance, and a strong sense of purpose. Bruce also expands on his "love songs" rap: "The question all love songs ask is, 'Will you pull your pants down?'" The biggest musical shake-up of the night comes when he inserts an impromptu cover between "The Promised Land" and "Dream Baby Dream": the tour premiere of the Standells' "Dirty Water."

IN THE AUDIENCE: Senator John Kerry and Teresa Heinz Kerry

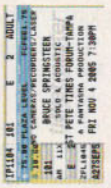
ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING: The difference between both Boston shows was like day and night—the second show was far more lively. You could hear it in his voice. When Bruce walked on stage he had the appearance of someone who had just literally rolled out of bed, but he was obviously well rested and seemed more focused and intense, especially during "Devils & Dust" and "Empty Sky." *—John Hancock*

BACK IN BOSS-FORM: I have long believed the best Bruce shows in the Northeast are in Boston and Philadelphia. No offense to the great state of New Jersey, but the shows in the Hub and Philly just seem to get in a better flow, and that has been the case for years. This night proved that theory. "Reason to Believe" was just savage in its intensity and set the tone for the show. My personal highlight was "Johnny 99" and "State Trooper" back to back. It was a *Nebraska* kind of night, and the arena, although huge, was made intimate by the sharp work of the sound crew and the respectful crowd. He dedicated "Lost in the Flood" to fans who attended shows at Paul's Mall, a Boston venue back in the 1970s, and called for his B-flat harp at the end of the night for an off-the-cuff cover of "Dirty Water." *—Peter Abraham*

M-U-DOUBLE L-I...: There was no repeat of the acoustic problems from the first night, and other "problems" just made the show even better. Bruce started playing "Back in Your Arms"—three notes in, he wondered if he was playing the right chord, and started it again. Halfway through the first verse, he said, "I think I'm playing this in the wrong key," only to receive a huge, thunderous applause. He began again and absolutely nailed it. There's something about when Bruce forgets the words—he took two mulligans on "Back in Your Arms," and like all those other times, the song ended up better for it. I can't explain it. It just was.

"Dirty Water" was a cappella, except for the harmonica between verses, and perhaps the best vocal performance of the night. I'm so accustomed to hearing this at the end of Boston shows, with the full band, that I started looking for Peter Wolf. *—Adam Hurtubise*

NOVEMBER 4
ST. PETERSBURG TIMES FORUM
TAMPA, FL



SETLIST: Fade Away***/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Be True***/Atlantic City*/State Trooper/Ain't Got You/Cynthia/One Step Up/Reno/Wreck on the Highway***/Real World*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks // I Wanna Marry You*****/Blinded By the Light/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: With the Boston filming behind him, Bruce again digs deep into his wealth of long-neglected songs, in particular showcasing material from *The River*, *Nebraska*, and *Tunnel of Love*. The written setlist reveals that "Cynthia" replaces "All I'm Thinkin' About," and both "My Hometown" and "Real World" fill in for "Lost in the Flood."

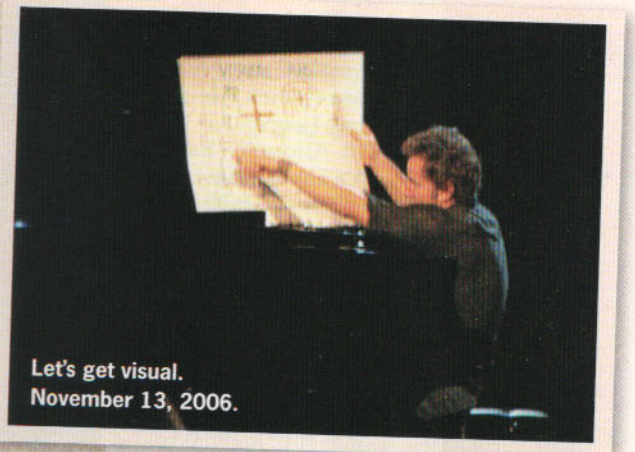
GOIN' BACK: I have to hand it to Bruce for going on with the show in Tampa after he was forced to reschedule the South Florida show due to Hurricane Wilma. The crowd was good—respectful, but never quite settling in. But Bruce's anecdotes were great, from the "now will you please pull your pants down" talk to his story about growing up with his Irish and Italian relatives living on opposite sides of the street from each other.

After about the fourth or fifth song I gave up trying to anticipate what the next song would be, just sitting back and taking it all in. Highlights were many, with "Fade Away" kicking things off, then rarities like "Be True," "Ain't Got You," "Cynthia," "One Step Up," "Wreck on the Highway," and "I Wanna Marry You." Most of these I have never heard live before.

—Randy Griffey

LIGHTNING STRIKES

Introducing "Jesus Was an Only Son," now with visual aid



RANDY GRESHAM PHOTO

Let's get visual.
November 13, 2006.

I grew up on a small street in a small town. I've kind of been explaining this visually—a few shows ago some kind person drew me a visual aid. I'd like to thank Ms. Patty Pappas, a Canadian, for putting this kind of time in on this piece. I grew up on a little L-shaped street. This was my house where I lived with my grandma, and my grandpop, and my parents, and my sister. There was a field, which actually was kind of in here *[points]*, and then there was the Catholic Church. As you can see, this is not drawn to scale, precisely... but the thing is, this is how big it *felt!* So, it's emotionally correct.

There was a nun's convent and the priest's rectory. Then, if you ran up the street, past my father's car that doesn't go in reverse—that's right—there was my aunt's house. My Aunt Joan, she lived there. I had two cousins in this house. Then there was my Aunt Jane's and my Uncle Pat's house. There were three grown man cousins in that house that always frightened me a little when I was small. (Megan, yeah, that's your Dad I'm talkin' about. She's here tonight).

Then up the street a few more houses was my great-grandmother's house. And this was all the Irish side of the family, right here. And then across the street from that was Fort Zirilli, the lone Italian outpost on that street.

It was an interesting bunch of people. I don't remember the folks from this side of the street ever crossing to this side, or the folks from this side ever crossing to that side, for some reason. The only thing I do remember was, I was kind of raised, particularly when I was young, by my father's side of the family, all the Irish folks.

They were a bit on the superstitious side. The main thing I remember was my grandmother, when it would thunder and lightning, would run me up the street to my Aunt Jane's house. We would sit all gathered, all the aunts and old ladies—and me, unfortunately—we would gather in the living room. They would begin the event by telling lightning horror stories before the storm hit, kind of psyching themselves up.

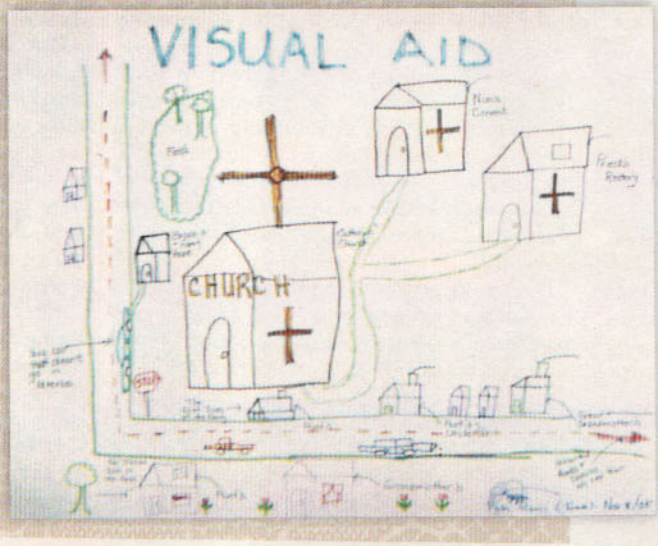
Their favorite one was, you know, Mr. Smith was walking his dog and a sudden storm... lightning hit a tree, went down into the sewer pipes, traveled through the sewer pipes, came up through a crack, and struck him in his ass and killed him. There were a lot of those kinds of stories shared.

Then, when it started to lightning they would pull the shades down—assuming that lightning cannot pass through shade material. Yep, then when it got really bad, there was quite a bit of moaning that went on. My Aunt Jane would then resort to the ultimate measure, which was busting out the bottle of holy water and throwing it all over us—you know, sprinkling it. And it scarred me for life! What can I say? They were a nice bunch of folks. They just happened to scar me for life.

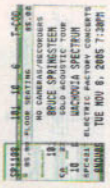
Then, of course, the church was in the middle, and everything was caught up with the church and the Catholic religion, which, of course, had all those images. A religion filled with beautiful poetry, and beautiful imagery, and, of course, abject horror and terror—which ended up filling all my own songs....

—11/13/05, Atlantic City, NJ

Patty Pappas made the "visual aid" before the Philly stand ("I had the houses in place, I even added some trees and flowers to the streets, there were cars on the streets and everything was labeled. Something was still missing. An 'A-ha!' moment—the car that wouldn't go in reverse just had to be included. In it went. Done.") and was there at the second Philly show when Bruce brought it out for the first time. Patty told Backstreets: *"Imagine my shock, my surprise, and my astonishment. I was jumping up and down like a crazy jelly bean, half laughing, half crying, when he was wondering if I was there. And then he said my name—okay, so the pronunciation was a little off, who cares?—and I kept jumping. I was allowed to go down to the stage by security, but it was very difficult to get Bruce's attention. I went back to my seat and tried to follow along for the rest of the night, but I only half-heard the rest of the songs.... I was just too busy giggling to myself and shaking!"*



NOVEMBER 8 – 9
WACHOVIA SPECTRUM
PHILADELPHIA, PA



11/8 SETLIST: Born in the U.S.A./Devils & Dust/The Ties That Bind/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/Fade Away***/Incident on 57th Street*/Johnny 99/Ain't Got You/Atlantic City/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Be True***/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks// I Wanna Marry You*****/Open All Night/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

11/8 SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Loose Ends," "TV Movie," "Seven Angels," "Fade Away," "Drive All Night," and "Candy's Room" on piano.

11/8 NOTES: The tour premieres of "Born in the USA," a harsh, bluesy bullet mic treatment, and the long-lost "Drive all Night," dedicated to British fan club Badlands, and last played on the European leg of the *River* tour, on 6/7/81.

STOMPIN' AT THE SPECTRUM: The death toll of American soldiers in Iraq had reached the shameful milestone of 2,000 less than two weeks prior to this show, giving the show's one-two opener "Born in the U.S.A." and "Devils & Dust" an air of political commentary. Whether or not you like the bullet mic effect overall, the consensus reaction to this one was "Whaaa?" It wasn't until the "I had a brother, at Khe San" line that I recognized the song; and even then I couldn't keep track of where he was.

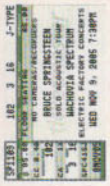
Bruce stomped so hard keeping time to the song that he knocked over a lamp that sat behind the piano. I heard the sound of breaking glass and assumed that he'd added that as a sound effect. But a couple songs later the stage crew came out to pick up the pieces and he said, "I've pretty much beat the shit out of everything on that table. That lamp was on *loan*—Patti's gonna kiiiiiill me." *—Marya Morris*

YOU'VE GOT MY LOVE: After a hard-to-believe nearly 25 years, Bruce finally dusted off "Drive All Night," a fan-favorite which had been frequently requested by many fans on the tour but Bruce had said was "too hard to play."

Yo Philly!
November 9, 2005.

LEONARD MACQUEEN PHOTO

It was easily the most emotional and dead-on performance of the tour. And as the ballad reached its familiar crescendo toward the end, you wondered which was going to give out first: his vocal cords, which seems to be on the verge of tearing with each "heart and soul," or the piano, as he forcibly drove his whole body into each chord he struck. The rendition was greeted with a rousing standing ovation, which Bruce acknowledged with a humble bow. —*John Schlicher*



11/9 SETLIST: Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Adam Raised a Cain/Long Time Comin'/Used Cars/Janey, Don't You Lose Heart***/Independence Day*/State Trooper/Nebraska/All the Way Home/Cynthia/One Step Up/Reno/Santa Ana*/Thundercrack*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/Waitin' on a Suny Day/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

11/9 SOUNDCHECK: A *Tracks*-heavy soundcheck includes "Santa Ana," "Thundercrack," "Loose Ends," "TV Movie," "Hearts of Stone," "Sad Eyes," "Seven Angels" (on both piano and guitar), and "Trouble River."

11/9 NOTES: The first performance of *Tracks* gem "Santa Ana" in 32 years—not played since 5/31/1973. It's followed immediately by another stunner of a tour debut, a solo-piano "Thundercrack." "Used Cars" finally resurfaces for the first time since the April Asbury Park rehearsals. Other rarities include "Independence Day," "Adam," "Janey," and "Cynthia." Altogether, Bruce plays 17 songs not played at the first show, making a total of 41 different songs played at this two-night Philly stand.

BOOM BOOM: As if taking a cue from the Rocky statue which stands in front of the beloved old Spectrum building where the shows took place, Bruce used night two to serve up the knock-out punch to fans who were still dazed and reeling from the shocker on the night before. The knock-out punch, however, turned out to be a one-two combination: "Santa Ana" followed by a delirious "Thundercrack." While the former was indeed an obscure treat (not played since 1973), it was the latter that served as the evening's highlight for both the performer and audience.

HARRY SCOTT PHOTO

Pausing several times in nervous hesitation while looking down at the piano keys then up to the crowd, a giggling Bruce teased everyone by saying, "I'm about to push the envelope!" before beginning the song. The man played many of the instrumental parts of the tune on the ivories with amazing accuracy, considering he only ran through it once during the soundcheck. While he attempted the frenetic "guitar" solo, everyone around me seemed to slowly inch forward from their seats, grimacing slightly and biting their lips, unsure—but hoping—he would successfully make his way though it. He came close. Laughing at the fact that he was probably in over his head at that point, he ended it abruptly, slamming an open fist on the keys. It was hard to tell who was smiling and eating it all up more, Bruce or us. Finally, on cue and to the obvious delight of a beaming Bruce, the Philly crowd of diehards responded to Bruce's first "All night" call at song's end and immediately rose to its feet to respond. We stayed standing for minutes after the song in ovation.

This was a fantastic show with exceptionally strong performances of staples "All The Way Home" and "The Rising," a mesmerizing "State Trooper," a lustful "Cynthia," an "Independence Day" dedicated to his father, the tour proper debut of "Used Cars," and a stunningly beautiful "One Step Up," the only song all night that everyone around me quietly sang along to—I guess we've all had our share of ups and downs in relationships (and kudos to Bruce for playing it like the recording—Bruce, you don't have to tinker with every song. Most are perfect how they are!) While full of magical moments that fans will be talking about for a long time, the shows themselves, unfortunately, won't find a place next to such legendary shows as the 12/9/80, 9/24/99 or 8/11/03 Philly performances. Bruce remains dedicated to catering to his Philly fans, but what these *D&D* shows lack that all classic shows possess is a great encore. The spontaneity that exists in the first 2/3 of these shows is inexplicably absent for the set closers and the encore. That being said, however, this was the strongest *Devils & Dust* show that I've seen. I'm one of Bruce's toughest critics when it comes to this tour, but with the Philly shows, particularly the second night, Bruce silenced my criticism. —*John Schlicher*

BRUISED & BATTERED: Tell me something. Why does Bruce favor the worst and most disrespectful audience in the country with the rarest songs and the best shows? I think I know. If he was not a famous rock star, he would be a typical member of a bad drunken Philly audience. We may not like it, but *these* are *his* people. Believe it or not, the guy next to me in the 12th row tonight *left during "Santa Ana" for a beer run!* And the concession stands were closed during the show so he came back pretty pissed off. I guess the eleven beers he had before the show began were wearing off. And during the first show I had a guy scream *"Up the ass!"* during... well, you know which song. I've seen it for years: Terrible audience in Philly; Bruce does "I Fought the Law," "Bus Stop," "Incident," "Fever," "I'm Bad, I'm Nationwide"... the list goes on. And all in a city that had to install a jail in its football stadium. Someone tell our boy that the fans in the rest of the world wouldn't mind a show like tonight's once in a while. But I guess that's why a fan living in Los Angeles managed to retain his perfect Spectrum attendance record this week. —*Robert Bader*

A LONG, LONG WAY FROM HOME

Trust, faith, and fear on Veterans Day in Norfolk. By ZACH EVERSON

I've often driven from my home in Washington, DC, to my younger brother's place in Virginia Beach. This time I stopped ten miles short. It was Veterans' Day and, whether by design or not, Bruce Springsteen was playing in Norfolk, VA, home of the world's largest naval station. Normally my brother, the first person in my house growing up to own a Springsteen recording, would have sat next to me at the concert. Only he's an F-14 pilot deployed in the Persian Gulf.

For me and the many other members of Navy families in the Constant Convocation Center, Springsteen's setlist meant a lot of the show was spent thinking about the person who should have been there with us.

Springsteen opened with a sparse "Born in the U.S.A." that had 20 years of difference with the album anthem but reflected military-induced blues all too well. There was no mistaking the meaning of this boot-stomping version. Thankfully my brother probably won't face the same problems as the "cool rocking daddy"—a ten-year-commitment to the Navy the day he got his pilot's wings means he won't need to see a hiring man or a V.A. man anytime soon.

But some of the other audience members' loved ones won't be as fortunate; the conditions that echoed through Springsteen's bullet mic will reverberate just as harshly through their lives when they return. The V.A. man will say to these new vets that he has a backlog of 336,000 disability claims waiting to be processed, with the average veteran waiting almost six months for a decision.[1] He'll say that the Pentagon wants to triple the health-insurance premiums for military retirees.[2] And he'll say that veterans using the G.I. Bill to fund their education face growing delays in receiving their checks.[3]

The next song, however, was relevant for everyone in the house with a friend or family member engaged in a military conflict. As Springsteen started "Devils & Dust," I thought about my brother soaring above the ground, his finger on the trigger, firing at something he can't see, at the instructions of someone he doesn't know. Hopefully, his trust is well placed.

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Springsteen mentions "trust" and "faith" five times in "Devils & Dust"—and for good reason. Military training indoctrinates both of those concepts into the would-be warriors—they need to trust the people giving the orders, painting the targets, analyzing the intelligence, guarding them while they sleep, and maintaining their equipment. And while families don't receive any training, they need to have trust and faith that the military will ensure their loved ones return safely.

But, as Springsteen sang, there are nights when "faith just ain't enough."

January 2, 2006, was one of them. At 10:30 p.m., nine members of an Iraqi family, including women and children, were killed inside their home by "precision-guided missiles" (namely, 100 cannon rounds and a bomb) fired from F-14s.[4] The Department of Defense said that an unmanned airplane caught three men planting what appeared to be a roadside bomb, and that they fled into the house.

When I heard about the tragedy, my initial reaction wasn't sorrow or anger, but fear. Fear that my brother may have been responsible; fear that if he was, it would kill one of the things he loved—flying. There are only two squadrons of F-14s left in the Navy—that's about 30 pilots. I'll never know his role, if any. On that night, however, faith just wasn't enough—it came up short for the pilots whose fingers were on the trigger, for the person who selected the target, and for that family of innocent Iraqis.

Yes, he's "a long, long way from home."

With the location, day, and opening two numbers so focused on our military, it was easy to read political and military themes into other songs Springsteen played in Norfolk. Two of the next songs I'd heard several times in concert, but only now did I find a political bent to them. "Adam Raised a Cain" could've been about the Presidents Bush; the last verse of "Point Blank" could have been about a soldier, rather than a lover.

In "The Wall," however, there was no doubt as to the song's meaning. Unlike "Born in the U.S.A." and "Devils & Dust," the subject's outcome is resolved—he's one of 58,249 names chiseled into black granite. Also, while the other two songs focused on the immediacy of the character's situation, this one looked at the long-term implications of war. Will the conflict in Iraq be something Donald Rumsfeld is apologizing for years later? Will there need to be a memorial? Hearing Springsteen sing "The Wall" forced me to confront my own naivety: I've always figured once my brother's six-month stint overseas ended, his engagement in the Iraqi conflict would be over. But "The Wall" made me realize that there were people during the early going of the Vietnam War who had the same thoughts. Talking about troop reduction is not the same as bringing them home.

As my brother's return date approaches, I wonder if he's going to be any different? What will be the effect of six months of relying on trust and faith? Four miles down the road from where Springsteen performed on Veteran's Day, what will my parents and I see when we look into his eyes when we welcome him home?

Zach Everson is a writer, editor, and consultant in Washington, DC. He and his brother are heading to Paris and Amsterdam for a vacation after his brother returns from the Persian Gulf.

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[1] U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA Disability Claims Processing," http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/claimpro.html (accessed February 21, 2006).

[2] David Goldstein, "Veterans' medical premiums may triple." *Seattle Times*, February 18, 2006.

[3] Allison Young, "GI Bill backlog delays aid to veterans." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 21, 2006.

[4] Richard A. Oppel Jr. and Omar Al-Neami, "U.S. Strike on Home Kills 9 in Family, Iraqi Officials Say." *New York Times*, January 4, 2006.

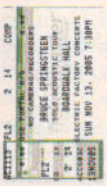
NOVEMBER 11
CONSTANT CONVOCATION CENTER
NORFOLK, VA

SETLIST: Born in the U.S.A./Devils & Dust/Adam Raised a Cain/Long Time Comin'/Point Blank***/The Wall*/Johnny 99/Ain't Got You/All the Way Home/Downbound Train**/Reno/You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)* (w/ Bruce Hornsby)/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The New Timer#/Across the Border (w/ Bruce Hornsby**-*)//Growin' Up*****/Open All Night/Blinded By the Light/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

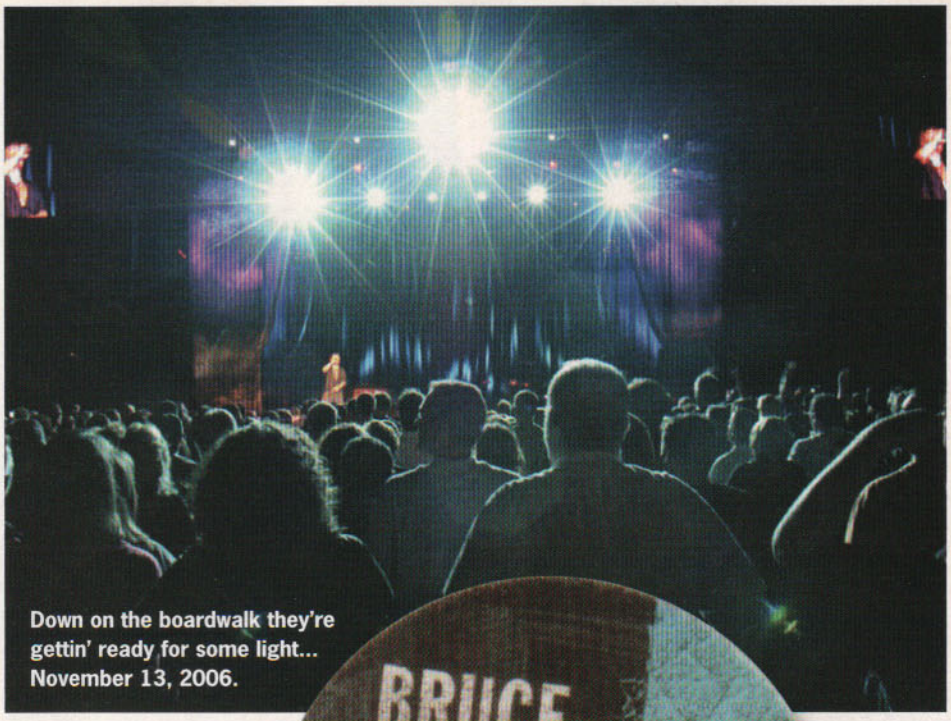
NOTES: This Veterans Day show in the Navy town of Norfolk gets the "Born in the U.S.A." into "Devils & Dust" opener, plus a great surprise in keeping with that theme: the tour premiere of "The Wall," previously played only at the *DoubleTake* benefit shows in 2003. Bruce introduces the song as one he wrote for an old friend and musical inspiration from local Freehold band The Motifs, who died in Vietnam. In the most memorable guest appearance of the tour, Virginia native Bruce Hornsby wanders onstage during "You Can Look," initiating some terrific interaction and dueling piano antics. "Across the Border," for the only time on the tour, closes the main set in the "Matamoros Banks" slot; Hornsby returns for this one as well, adding "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" as an intro on the pump organ.

TWO BRUCES ARE BETTER THAN ONE: The top two moments were the beautiful rendition of "Drive All Night" at the piano—it's hard to believe Bruce has kept this song buried for so long—and the interaction between the Boss and Bruce Hornsby on "You Can Look." Springsteen started tickling the ivories and mentioning how he was "coming for Bruce Hornsby's day job" and a few moments later, Hornsby nonchalantly walked out, seemingly engrossed in a local newspaper. It was one of the best and most entertaining moments I have seen at a Bruce show. The hauntingly beautiful "Across the Border" also featured Hornsby, starting on pump organ and then moving to piano, with Springsteen on guitar. With all the rarities, this show was a real treat. —*Richard Kraft*

NOVEMBER 13
BOARDWALK HALL
ATLANTIC CITY, NJ



SETLIST: Born in the U.S.A./Devils & Dust/Atlantic City/Long Time Comin'/Fade Away***/Santa Ana*/Johnny 99/Open All Night/Maria's Bed/Brilliant Disguise/Reno/Janey, Don't You Lose Heart***/Lost in the Flood*/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)***/Thundercrack*/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**



Down on the boardwalk they're gettin' ready for some light... November 13, 2006.

RANDY GRESHAM PHOTO

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "I Wish I Were Blind" and "TV Movie" (piano)

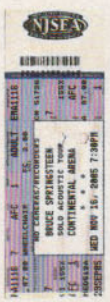
NOTES: "Atlantic City" predictably makes a showing at Springsteen's second-ever show in that song's namesake town, in a set chock full of rarities (though no premieres). "Sandy" is dedicated to Mark Hagen of the BBC for his help with the *Born to Run* 30th anniversary box set. Audibles are "Lost in the Flood," "Maria's Bed" in place of "All I'm Thinkin' About," and "Brilliant Disguise" in place of "Living Proof."

MILLION DOLLAR SOUND: The fantastic acoustics in the 76-year-old Boardwalk Hall and a great setlist made for an outstanding show. I saw close to 20 shows on the tour, and this by far was the best sound I heard. You could hear Bruce slurping when he took a drink from his cup. Combine the setlist highlights from both Philadelphia shows and you got a very special show on the boardwalk.

Introducing "Santa Ana," Bruce said, "Love songs... there's kind of only two kinds of love songs. There's getting-together songs when we're infatuated, and there's breakup songs. I guess there are some fuck-you songs, usually in country music, actually... then I'm-going-to-kill-you songs—that's usually in folk music and rap music. So everybody takes their own approach to the whole thing." —*Stan Goldstein*

NOTHING HOT TEA WON'T CURE: Bruce was suffering from the remnants of the cold which would also affect the first CAA show. As a result, the vocals were not exactly always perfect, and he was a bit mellow. But what he was able to do in poor health, after six months on the road, solo, most performers are unable to accomplish on their best nights. From his bullet mic renditions of "Born in the U.S.A." and "Johnny 99" (which, I have to admit, I am not fond of), to his heartbreakingly beautiful lyrics and vocals in "Drive All Night," to his playful cackle at the end of "Thundercrack," Bruce provided his audience an "experience" with every song. For two hours I was riveted. I did not want the night to end. —*Renita Persaud, Esq.*

NOVEMBER 16 – 17
CONTINENTAL AIRLINES ARENA
E. RUTHERFORD, NJ



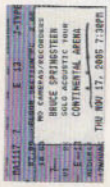
11/16 SETLIST: Empty Sky/Born in the U.S.A./Devils & Dust/Long Time Comin'/The Wall*/Backstreets*/Johnny 99/Part Man, Part Monkey/Ain't Got You/All the Way Home/One Step Up/Reno/Santa Ana*/Lost in the Flood*/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The New Timer#//Matamoros Banks//Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street*****/My

Best Was Never Good Enough/Thundercrack*/ The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

11/16 NOTES: On the first show since the release of the *Born to Run* 30th Anniversary box set, Bruce dusts off "Backstreets," dedicating it with a "Happy Anniversary!" to Jon Landau. "Thundercrack" is dedicated to longtime attorney and friend Artie Indursky and his wife Deanne. Other notables include the second tour performance of "The Wall," and the first-ever "Does This Bus Stop" on ukulele. As in Atlantic City, Bruce is struggling with a bad cold, which makes some high notes hard to hit tonight, but he still has a go at the "One Step Up" falsetto.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Kris Kristofferson

THE BEST THING THIS SHIT TOWN EVER HAD: Despite a cough and cracking voice at times, Bruce put on a great show to open the Meadowlands stand while drinking tea (or whatever was in the mug) throughout the show. Introducing "The Wall" at the piano, he mentioned Freehold, and there was a loud cheer—to which he responded, "Yeah, let's hear it for that hellhole!" He proceeded to talk about how important local bands are, and one in particular that he looked up to while growing up, The Motifs. There were two brothers who fronted the band, and as Bruce told the crowd, one of them went off to Vietnam and didn't come back. While visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC Bruce got the inspiration to write "The Wall" for him. —*Joe Lewin*



11/17 SETLIST: Born in the U.S.A./ Devils & Dust/Atlantic City/Long Time Comin'/Used Cars/Frankie*/ Meeting Across the River*/Johnny 99/Ain't Got You/Brilliant Disguise (w/ Patti Scialfa)/Maria's Bed/Cautious Man/Reno/Two For the Road***/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks// I Wanna Marry You*****/Thundercrack*/Born to Run/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

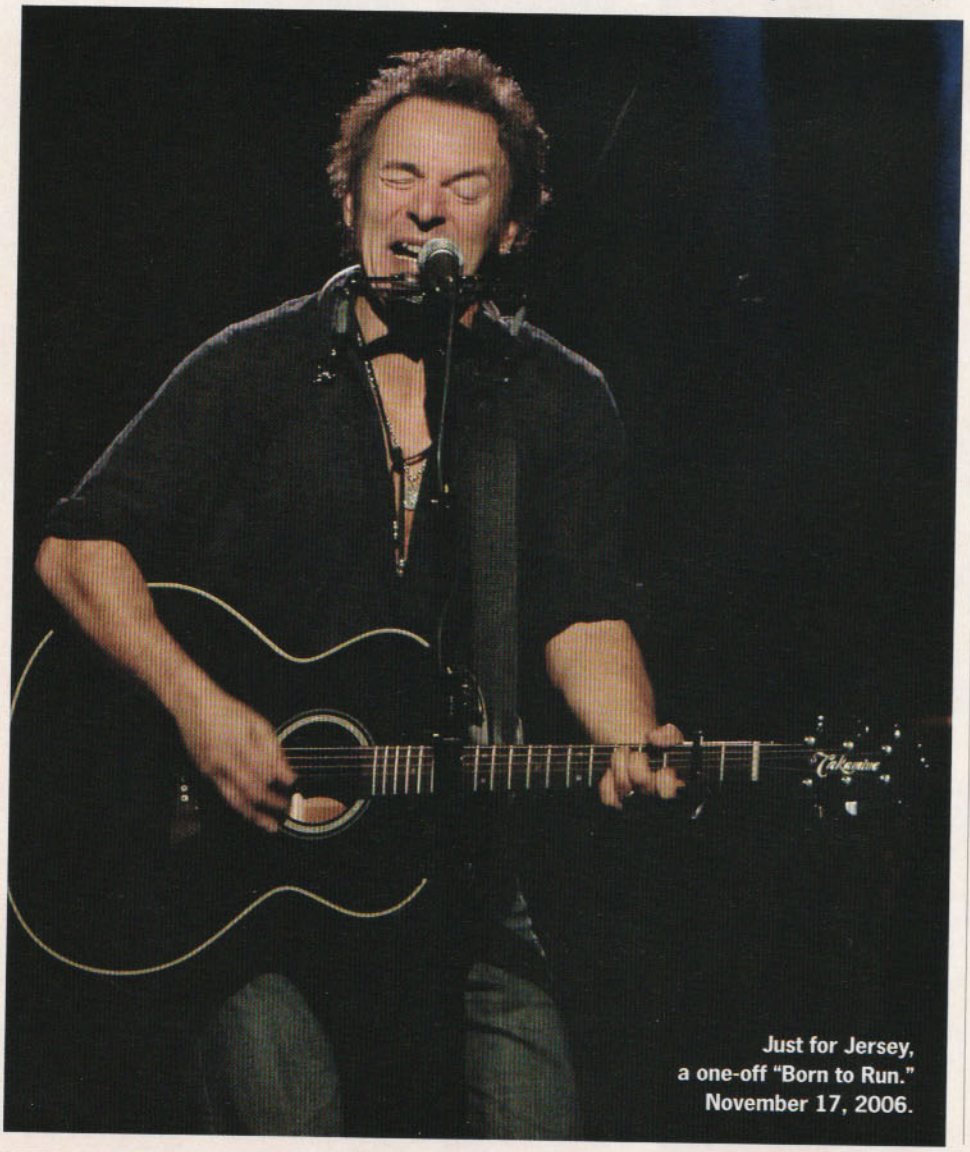
11/17 NOTES: Bruce's cold has disappeared, but the *Born to Run* celebration continues, with a pair of tour premieres: the first-ever solo piano "Meeting Across the River," and the first acoustic "Born to Run" since the *Tunnel* tour, on guitar and harp. Dedications galore, including "Born to Run" sent out to Don Ienner and Columbia, "Used Cars" to his late father; "Drive All Night" by request from John to Maria, just engaged in the parking lot; and more (see below). Patti Scialfa guests for the first time since *Storytellers*, on "Brilliant Disguise."

LET'S GET SIRIUS: What a difference a night makes. The performance tonight was far superior to last night's show—Bruce's voice was in better shape, there was more passion and emotion in the singing, his playing was better, the stories, the setlist... the entire performance was better. The clear highlights of the show were "Meeting Across the River" on piano (which got a standing ovation), "Cautious Man," "Two for the Road," "Drive All Night," the acoustic "Born to Run," and nearly forgotten *Devils & Dust* tunes "Maria's Bed" and "Leah."

Before "Used Cars" he said, "I'd like to play this next one for my dad. I know I slammed the bastard so much in my songs, so I need to do one for him. Besides, what would my songs had been like if things had been great between us?"

Bruce dedicated "Two For the Road" to "Scott Greenstein and all the guys at Sirius radio. I have my own channel there. It's a little weird and a little scary.... " He went on to say that he'd heard "so many things I didn't know I did" and joked "they know more about me than I know about myself—next time I need to know something about me, I'm going to ask them!" Once he started to play the song, he messed up after a couple of lines, and jokingly asked "Scott, how does this one go?" But he got his fingering right and proceeded to play a sweet, tender version.

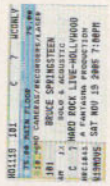
For "Jesus Was an Only Son," he once again used the "visual aid" map to show how close all his relatives lived to him and the church, spoke about his superstitious aunts and the stories they'd tell during a thunderstorm, and dedicated the song to his cousin Glen— one of those "adult" cousins who scared him as a child, who was in the audience tonight. —*Joe Lewin*



DEB CARVALHO PHOTO

Just for Jersey, a one-off "Born to Run." November 17, 2006.

NOVEMBER 19 SEMINOLE HARD ROCK LIVE HOLLYWOOD, FL



SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Born in the U.S.A./Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/ Fade Away***/Meeting Across the River*/Johnny 99/Ain't Got You/All I'm Thinkin' About/One Step Up/Reno/Roll of the Dice***/ Santa Ana*/Drive All Night* (w/ Clarence Clemons & Steve Van Zandt)/The Rising/ Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts(w/ Steve)/The New Timer#/Matamoros Banks//I Wanna Marry You*****/Thundercrack* (w/ Clarence & Steve)/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Thundercrack"

NOTES: This make-up show, postponed and relocated due to Hurricane Wilma, features two E Street guests, Steve Van Zandt and local hero Clarence Clemons. They come out first for "Drive All Night," adding texture for the musical highlight of the night, with Steve picking on a six-string acoustic and the Big Man nailing the all-important sax solo. Steve returns for "Two Hearts," naturally, on acoustic guitar

RICHARD GOLDBERG PHOTO

The E Street Trio.
November 19, 2006.

and vocals, and both E Streeters lend a hand on for another trio on "Thundercrack" in the encore. A nod to the casino setting, "Roll of the Dice" gets its tour premiere.

THREE HEARTS: I know this is a solo tour, but three was not a crowd on Saturday night. The setlist was decent, but there's no doubt that the appearance of Clarence and Stevie far overshadowed the song selection. The night had nearly the energy of a full band show when they were on stage, and Bruce didn't even try to quiet the standing ovation each time the E Streeters appeared. For me, "Meeting Across the River," Clarence's sax on "Drive All Night," and "Thundercrack" with Clarence and Stevie were the highlights of the set. Show opener "Into the Fire" on pump organ was pretty intense, but some of the crowd didn't know to appreciate the moment quietly. After "Into the Fire," Bruce reminded the crowd to shut up with a profanity-laced tirade that pretty much did the trick. *—Chad Paiva*

NOVEMBER 21 – 22
SOVEREIGN BANK ARENA
TRENTON, NJ

11/21 SETLIST: Rumble/Born in the U.S.A./Devils & Dust/Atlantic City/Long Time Comin'/Fade Away***/Meeting Across the River*/It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City/State Trooper/Nebraska/All the Way Home/One Step Up/Reno/Two for the Road***/Santa Ana*/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/Song for Orphans (w/ Alan Fitzgerald*)/Matamoros Banks//Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street*****/Thundercrack*/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

11/21 SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Song for Orphans," "Pony Boy," "Real Man," and "Fire" on the bullet mic.

11/21 NOTES: The first night of Bruce's closing Trenton stand is his first performance here since 1974. A surprise opener: "This is for Link Wray," Bruce says before a foot-stomping version of the late guitar legend's 1958 hit instrumental "Rumble." (Incidentally, proving that great minds think alike, Bob Dylan, opens some of his own shows on tour in the U.K. with the very same song.) "Saint in the City" is radically reworked as a vocally distorted, bullet mic blues. With Alan Fitzgerald at the grand piano, Bruce plays the unreleased "Song for Orphans" for the first time since since 1973.

Quite a few audibles: "Fade Away" is in for the setlisted "Sandy," "Two For the Road" and "Santa Ana" in for "All That Heaven Will Allow," and "Spare Parts" in for "Further On."

THE TRUMP CARD: For anyone who thought the premieres of "Santa Ana," "Thundercrack," or "Drive All Night" were the "holy shit" moment of the tour, Bruce pulled out one that trumped them all: "Song for Orphans." It was a stunningly beautiful version with Bruce on guitar and his offstage keyboard/synthesizer player—"the mysterious Mr. Fitz"—now on stage playing piano. "It's his onstage debut," Bruce told the crowd, "so don't make him nervous!" He went on to say, "I think this is an outtake from *Greetings from Asbury Park* that's never been released," and when the audience responded with applause, he added, "You're not going to know this bastard.... Then again, some of you just might!" When the song was done, he got one of his three standing ovations of the night, and remarked, "That was pretty good." *—Joe Lewin*

"RUMBLE" ON THE PROMENADE

Link Wray, 1929 - 2005

Fans who attended the last two nights of the *Devils & Dust* tour in Trenton were treated to an ominous-sounding, surprise rendition of the raucous 1958 instrumental, "Rumble." And while a new version of anything by Bruce is always cause for celebration among the faithful, this time the occasion was bittersweet. For those in the know, Bruce's performance of the preeminent, slashing guitar showcase marked the passing of a musical giant, an influential if often underrated rock 'n' roll pioneer by the name of Link Wray, who passed away on November 5, 2005.

It's not hard to understand the appeal Bruce might have found in the songs and persona of Link Wray: the North Carolina-born guitarist had a reputation as a musical trailblazer, a black jeans and leather-jacketed rebel who, like Bruce, effortlessly assimilated all sorts of music, from country and folk to pop to blues, into a vibrant style that resounded with the familiarity of those influences but that was wholly his own. From the post-rockabilly, proto-garage stomp of "Rumble," and the equally raucous "Jack the Ripper," to the downright Dylanesque "Facin' All the Same Tomorrows," and "Fire and Brimstone," Wray maintained a consistent level of quality from the 1950s through the early 1970s, all the while experimenting with new sounds to add to his distorted guitar base.

Despite the fact that Wray had never stopped making records, it felt like a comeback when he returned to his '50s roots with a vengeance in the late 1970s, joining with rockabilly revivalist Robert Gordon for two sizzling albums that consisted almost entirely of covers but that managed to sound right at home in the punk-infused musical climate of the era. It was on the second of these, 1978's *Fresh Fish Special*, that Wray and the Boss finally crossed paths. Springsteen donated "Fire" to the sessions and wound up playing piano on the track himself. The song would go on to be a number two pop hit, but only after being covered by the Pointer Sisters in 1979. No matter—Springsteen's endorsement of Gordon and Wray extended to joining the duo onstage at New York University to chime in on a version of the Elvis Presley classic "Heartbreak Hotel" and solidified a mutual admiration society that would continue until Wray's untimely death last year.

If, ultimately, one is judged by the respect afforded by one's peers, then it's safe to say that Link Wray was a man held in high esteem. Along with Bruce's heartfelt musical tribute, luminaries like Pete Townshend and Neil Young weighed in, acknowledging their own debts to the legendary guitarist, who was still touring regularly up until his passing. The man may be gone, but the Rumble lives on.

—John Howie, Jr.

11/22 SETLIST: Rumble/Born in the U.S.A./My Beautiful Reward**/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Zero and Blind Terry*/Backstreets*/It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City/Fire/All the Way Home/Mansion on the Hill/Reno/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Drive All Night*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/Song for Orphans (w/ Alan Fitzgerald*)/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up*****/Thundercrack*/Santa Claus is Comin' to Town* (w/ family & friends)/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

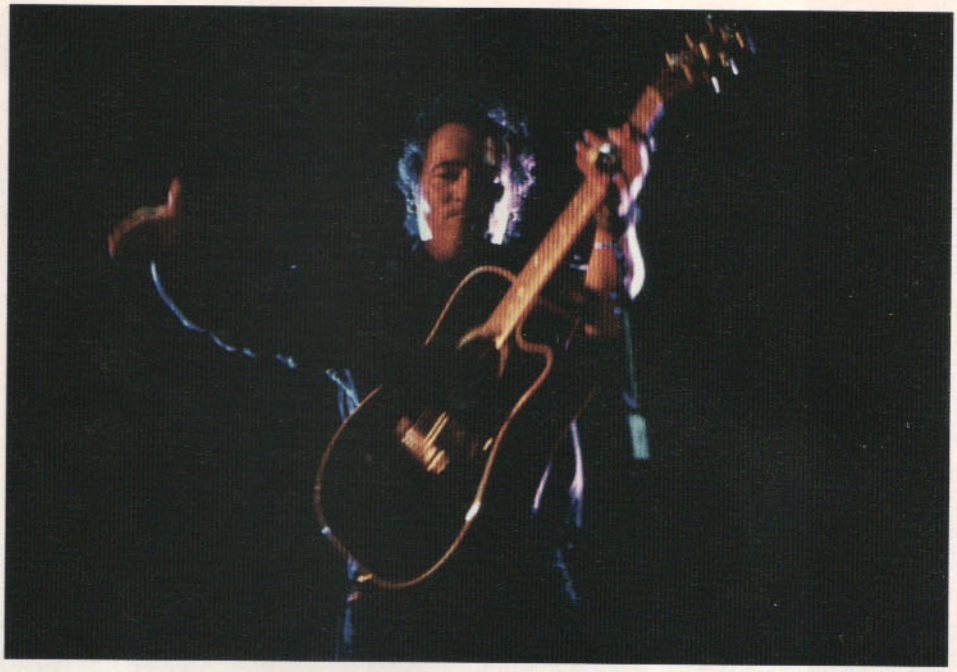
11/22 NOTES: Bruce brings the seven-month *Devils & Dust* tour to a triumphant close with a show that, momentarily, doubles as tour finale and holiday show. Patti Scialfa and their children are all in the house; Bruce dedicates songs to each of them and brings them (and many more) onstage for a little help on the tour's one and only "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town."

All around a solid though meandering show, quite similar to the previous night yet still yielding a generous four tour premieres, keeping the setlist freaks on their toes and gasping to the very end. In addition to "Santa Claus," there's *Tracks* shocker "Zero and Blind Terry" (previously performed, infrequently, in 1973-'74); a stripped-down "Fire" on bullet mic and harp; and a duet with Patti on their reunion tour staple "Mansion on the Hill" (the last song remaining to be played from *Nebraska* this year). "Backstreets" replaces the setlisted "Meeting Across the River."

LET'S DANCE THE LAST DANCE: For the tour finale, Bruce definitely didn't disappoint, bringing out his "A+" game. From the time he took the stage to Donna Summer's "Last Dance" [over the P.A.] to the closing strains of "Dream Baby Dream," Bruce was in great spirits all night. Before "Zero and Blind Terry," Bruce spoke about how he was writing fables that were almost fairy tale-like around the time of his first two albums, and that this was one of them. Played on the grand piano it sounded magnificent, earning him a standing ovation.

"Fire" was on the bullet mic and virtually a cappella, but you knew what song it was from line one. At the "but your heart stays cool" line, Bruce froze in a bow with his arms out at his side and held that position for a minute or so, soaking in the applause before going into the final verse. Bruce sang "Song for Orphans" (again with Alan Fitzgerald) even better tonight than he did on Monday, playing the first couple of verses to a faintly Bob Dylan-esque melody.

Bruce stayed at the grand piano after "Thundercrack" and brought out the family—Patti, all three of their kids, various other relatives and friends, all armed with sleighbells or tambourines. He commented, "There's no gathering around the piano like this at home.... I think we can fake our way through this one," and started playing "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town. " For the first "you better be good for goodness sake," Bruce tried doing it in a deep Clarence-esque voice and failed, cracking himself up; he let the crowd do the rest of them. He also hit some piano trouble midway through and joked, "Professor, don't quit your day job!" After the song Bruce joked, "That's about as warm and fuzzy as it gets. If I tried that at home I'd get looks like I'm insane." —*Joe Lewin*



RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

COOL ROCKIN' DADDY: Bruce played to just four people tonight—thousands of other people just happened to be there during Take Your Family to Work Night. Tenderly dedicating songs to Evan, Jesse, Sam and Patti during the course of the evening, his heart and focus were stage left all night long. You could literally feel Bruce's pride. Pride in not having f'ed it up too bad—not just this time, but three times. Pride in pulling off a very complex show that asked much from all and involved major effort from both himself and the audience every single night. A man basking in his accomplishments as the holidays approach. A man looking back on a masterpiece created 30 years ago, and at last finally celebrating the brilliance of his work instead of steadfastly denying it.

As for the show itself, I was disappointed that there wasn't more deviation from night one. Why repeat "Song for Orphans," and a bad version of "Saint"? "Thundercrack" was fun as a one-timer, but it doesn't work every night. Very disappointed that "Rumble" counted as our Gretsch song. "Zero" was just okay. "Fire" was tremendous—but why wait until now?!

"Drive All Night" is just awesome, awesome, awesome. In my perfect world, every fan gets to hear Bruce do this song live once. Fill the hall, Bruce comes out and does "Drive All Night." Empty the hall, fill it with a new shift of fans, Bruce comes out and does "Drive All Night." Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Everyone should get to hear it live. There's no adjective strong enough to describe the stunning greatness of this song and this ultra-intimate performance of it. I hate to think that we may never hear it this way again. "Backstreets" was equally stunning.

Okay Boss... what's next? This was a grand slam. Can't wait to see what you have in mind for 2006. —*Bert Haughin*

Well, Bert, we found out pretty damn fast that Bruce had something completely different up his sleeve for this year. As our show-by-show reports continue next issue with *Seeger Sessions* tour coverage, don't forget that we count on our readers around the world to report in. Special thanks this time to: Peter Abraham, Kary Antholis, Tina Balboni, Daniel Baldassare, Leon Berkowitz, David Billotti, Karl Birthistle, Mike Bjork, Jeff Blum, Rick Boucher, Tim Buksa, Katherine Byrd, Tom Cantillon, Fran Carroll, Paul Carter, Karen Chapman, Wendy Chase, Joe Clark, Rocco Coviello, Jason Crane, Mary Culnan, Ellie Deegan, Matthew DeFazio, Don DeGregorio, Gregory Denny, Kat Dickinson, Jim Donnelly, David Evans, Zach Everson, Eric Field, Stacey Fink, Jeannie Fino, John L. Gage, Peter Galati, Mo Gardner, Tom Gardner, Donald Gibson, Douglas Gillie, Richard Goldberg, Lizzy Goldstein, Stan Goldstein, Randy Gresham, Randy Griffey, John Griffin, Jack Grosso, Mitch Hallock, R.J. Halpern, John Hancock, Jeanine Harper, Bert Haughin, Gregg W. Holgate, Adam Hurtubise, Blake Indursky, "Jason NY", T. Johns, Wendy K., Bill Kenney, Bill King, Richard Kraft, Mark Kravitz, Joseph Kubon, Jason Kucera, Joe Kunecki, Joe LaClair, PJ Levine, Joe Lewin, John Lewis, Bob Ley, Nancy Litchman, Craig London, "Luvly Linda," Leonard MacQueen, Judy MacQueston, Matt Magee, John Maher, Kris Malandruccolo, Steve Marlin, Bill Martin, Steven Marra, Lou Masur, Todd M. McKeever, Jeff Metzger, "Mike in Richmond", Marya Morris, Mike Mulroy, Erik Nelson, Jerry Newcomb, Bobby Nicol, E. Nivel, Chad Paiva, Carmen Palogruto, Kurt M. Petersen, Renita Persaud Esq., Brookes Peters, Fran Petito, Johanna Pirttijarvi, Linda Prisco, Steve Radzimski, "Richardonebay", Mark Rifkin, "Retro Gina" Don Rosenthal, Pamela Ross, Gene Sautner, John Schlicher, Todd Sikorski, Sally Sorenson, David Steigbigel, Mark Stitt, Steven Sukel, Brigitte Tersek, Tom Trulis, Suzanne Valle, Rhonda and Mark Weinstein, Tom Weiss, Jeff Wisser, Tom Wolanski, and everyone else who provided concert reports, ticket stubs, and photos to help us document this tour.

"SHHH, I GOT A STORY TO TELL..."

Wit, wisdom, & wildlife on the *Devils & Dust* Solo & Acoustic tour

"I tend to like to write songs about people whose souls are at risk. Probably goes back to being told that every day for eight years as a child at school *[laughs]*, those things tend to stick with you.... But I later on found out that writing about it momentarily put my own soul at ease, and so I gravitated towards those kinds of characters."

4/28/05, Dallas, TX

"Recently they released on DVD this terrific movie called *Two-Lane Blacktop*. It was directed by a fellow named Monte Hellman. *[The crowd is silent.]* I can tell you've seen all his work *[laughs]*. But he was a terrific director in the mid-'70s, made a series of great pictures, *Two-Lane Blacktop* was one of them. It starred James Taylor and Dennis Wilson and Warren Oates, and it's a movie about a cross-country race. So I wrote this... I didn't see the movie until a little after I wrote this song, but there are a lot of similarities in it. If you get a chance and you're up for a little adventure, check out *Two-Lane Blacktop*—or there's a movie called *Cockfighter*, also starring Warren Oates. They're just not quite like anything you've seen."

4/30/05, Glendale, AZ ("Racing in the Street")

"I'll bust this one out. I haven't played it yet.... It may suck, you don't know—don't jump to conclusions there."

5/3/05, Los Angeles, CA ("All The Way Home")

"You can relax, and you shouldn't clap if you recognize a song. I always feel like I'm heading for Vegas when I hear that applause. I want to stop and play something else, right away. *[A fan whistles.]* Yeah, whistling—cut that shit out. And if you recognize something, just do this *[nods head]*. Just like that. It'll get to me. I'll feel that."

5/10/05, St. Paul, MN

"A couple of youngsters out there might want to check out the t-shirt sales out there during this one—give you a heads up! There are some fine items out there for the youngsters."

5/11/05, Chicago, IL ("Reno")

"Good evening, Cleveland! Great to be in town! Let me see, the last time I was here was for the Vote for Change tour. Which is either an inspirational or traumatic memory for me, depending on how I'm feeling. We voted. We didn't change! What can I say? There's work to be done! Men have lived through the dark ages before."

5/15/05, Cleveland, OH

"This is a song off *Devils & Dust*, and it will soon be available in Krispy Kremes all across the nation."

5/15/05, Cleveland, OH ("Reno")

"How're we doing here, Philly? I feel like I grew up in that alley back there. It was serious déjà vu—it was kind of scary!"

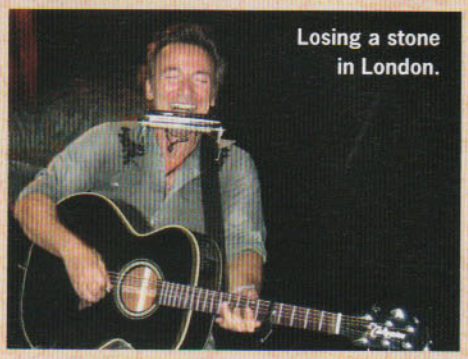
5/17/05, Tower Theatre, Philadelphia, PA

"The President says the jury's out on evolution. That's right—very, very iffy, evolution.... Right now in Kansas, 80 years after the Scopes Monkey Trial, they're rethinking the whole evolution thing. And does Dover, Pennsylvania mean anything to you? It's happening right here in your backyard, folks. Now, in New Jersey, we believe in evolution—it's our only hope. And personally, I think that the President believes in evolution, too, but he can't say he does, because the monkey vote didn't put him in office."

5/17/05, Philadelphia, PA ("Part Man, Part Monkey")

"Here is a song I wrote in the early '90s that kind of got away from me on the record. I didn't get a good version of it, but it is a good song. This is when I was feeling the love and sharing the love."

5/24/05, Dublin ("Real World")



Losing a stone in London.

GEOFF ROBINSON PHOTO

"Where'd this song come from? This came from—I had a girlfriend. There used to be a hill. We used to go up on top of this hill, and we could see all of New York City, about 15 miles away. We used to pass this little church, and I used to say, 'We are going to be married in that chapel!' Then we broke up, and she sold a lot of my stuff to the Hard Rock Café—and lightning hit the church, and it burned down *[laughs]*."

5/27/05, London ("Ramrod")

"I think the first shock that hits you when you become a parent is how, suddenly, there's nothing in the world you wouldn't do to protect your kids. Very shocking for self-involved musicians to find that one out...."

5/27/05, London ("Jesus Was an Only Son")

"I've been in London for a few days, and a couple things I've noticed: one, it gets hot here. I didn't think it got that hot—I lost a few stones standing still last night. And the other thing is, I went to the park for some relief—you guys are feeding the wildlife too much! I had a squirrel jump up on the bench right next to me, then jump in my lap. Never seen that before. And squirrels, they're kind of cute at a distance, but like up close, they look fucking insane... their little eyes are bulging... I was afraid the thing was going straight for the nuts!

5/28/05, London

"Yeah, I think my fingers were searching for Roy Bittan on that one..."

5/30/05, Brussels ("Tougher Than the Rest")

"I want to thank everybody for coming down to the show tonight, just say thanks for taking my music into your lives over the past 30 years or so, I appreciate that. You were really a beautiful audience tonight, too, thank you. Of course, if you keep going with those little flash cameras, I'm gonna kill you."

5/30/05, Brussels

"I go away and come back and I forget how beautiful Rome is. It takes your breath away when you ride in at night. It's a beautiful city. In the middle of the night, the buildings, they speak. They all speak. It's a very inspirational city to be in. Thank you for hosting me tonight."

6/6/05, Rome

***"Danke, danke....* all right, I had** a request a few days back for this by some guys that have been following me around, so I'm gonna try and get 'em off my ass *[laughs]*. This is the stalking request for the stalkers...."

6/15/05 Frankfurt ("Lost in the Flood")

"How does everyone decide that? *[Laughs]* That's like... *[someone yells, "Italians!"]* The Italians do it, that's what I figured! It's their fault. I have the most unusual and silent stage rush in the history of rock 'n' roll. I played 'The Hitter,' and they rushed the stage *[laughs]*. Very strange. All right, kids, shhh, I got a story to tell...."

6/19/05, Rotterdam ("Matamoros Banks")

"A special dedication tonight for this one—I've got my oldest son Evan with me, gonna do this for him. He can tell you if this is true or bullshit. He's gonna put up with the boredom of Dad's chosen profession for a night—this is for you, Ev. *[Sings:]* Pony boy, pony boy, won't you be my.... He'll kill me if I play that!"

7/16/05, Albany, NY ("Long Time Comin'")

Transcriptions by MARK STRICHERZ and JOHANNA PIRTTIJARVI / BRUCEBASE

"I've been in Buffalo two days, you're the first folks I've seen..:.. Where the hell is everybody?"

7/18/05, Buffalo, NY

"Had a request for this song backstage, it came on a little piece of paper. I don't have it now, but it just said, 'Play "Everything is Everything."' So I'm sitting there, '"Everything is everything," that sounds familiar.... I never wrote a song called "Everything is Everything"... I think I wrote a *line* that says "everything is everything"...' I'm straining my brain, and I finally figured it out.

So this is for Lisa. Lisa, that is the incorrect title for this song *[laughs]*. I often wonder, when I get a request like that, I wonder, like, how much could you like the song if you don't know the title? But, you know, sometimes you only have to hear something once...."

7/18/05, Buffalo, NY ("You're Missing")

"I was raised Catholic, so Jesus is my defacto homeboy.... I got out of grammar school and then I told my parents I wouldn't go to Catholic high school, so I had to go to religious classes for a while. Monday night, everybody was just fooling around.... and then I sort of got away from the whole thing. But it ends up being sort of like Al Pacino says in that terrible *Godfather III:* I try to get out, they keep pulling me back in. 'They' being my aunts and relatives and such *[laughs]*.

"You know, occasionally I gotta attend Mass... and whenever Communion comes around, they're always pulling at me to go get it. First of all, you're supposed to say a confession and contrition before you go, which I haven't done. Besides that, I keep trying to explain to them that I'm divorced, and therefore excommunicated—so I've got all kinds of outs. They just wanna see you eat the wafer, that's all: 'Got him! We got him! He's back, we got him, I told ya!'"

7/18/05, Buffalo, NY ("Jesus Was an Only Son")

"There's a great line in *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor. What is it? Guy starts a 'Church of Jesus Christ: Dead, Buried, and Remaining That Way.' It's an idea."

8/3/05, Grand Rapids, MI ("The Hitter")

"I always figured that the whole Garden of Eden thing was a set-up in the first place. I mean, okay, there's this garden. You can go anywhere you want in the garden—but you can't touch that one tree!... Come on, they're human! How many walks around the garden can you take, my friends? It's limited! No matter how great it is, you can only take so many walks around the garden. You just keep coming back to the same tree. And not only that, but it's the only tree in the garden with a talking snake—it's the *interesting* tree."

8/10/05, Portland, OR ("The Hitter")

"This comes from a record that people generally consider my weakest album. Whenever I'm paging through magazines and there's like a compendium of your records—you know, 'The Bruce to Buy' and 'The Bruce Not to Buy'—this is always sort of 'star-challenged,' this record. Perhaps unfairly, I don't know *[laughs]*. But this was requested by a fellow from Norway—you see, the thing is, in Norway this is considered a masterpiece. It's considered my best over there *[laughs]*.... Any time somebody requests this song, I always go, 'You poor sucker,' because that means that the world's just crashed down on you. If you wanna hear this one, you just took it over the head bad, and you don't know which way is up. So I'll do this one, wishing the man better luck."

8/10/05, Portland, OR ("I Wish I Were Blind")

"You know, rock musicians, you always go back to the prototype. Of course, with guys my generation, it's Elvis. But all Italian and Irish rockers know that before there was Elvis, there was Jesus. He was actually the first front-man. Jesus and the Disciples—it's a fabulous band name, I don't know why somebody hasn't come up with that yet.... The preaching, that's where the frontmen came from, that's where James Brown got it, and he passed it on to us kids, and so it all goes back. That's completely idiotic, but it's true."

10/7/05, Hartford, CT ("Jesus Was an Only Son"")

"When I'm approached on the street by fans, usually a barrage of curses drives them away. But not always. I'm asked many questions. 'Do you have any change?' Yeah, and, 'How do you do it?' But one of the main ones I always seem to be asked quite often is, 'What's it like to be the Boss?' I get asked that quite a bit.

"Now, over the years, I have this very humble, bullshit response that I give out, like, 'It's no big deal,' or 'Those are the breaks. That's the way the cards are dealt.' I've done pretty well with the whole humble bit, and I'm going to be sticking with that for the rest of my career. But the actual answer would be, *'Fantastic beyond your wildest dreams.'* I don't usually give that answer out. I don't usually say that answer, because it can feel like you're lording it over people—and I'd rather do that in private.

"But I did write about it once—and nobody liked it. I just did it in the interest of full disclosure. Let's figure it out, here."

10/12/05, Minneapolis, MN ("Ain't Got You")

"I've always got to put a little disclaimer on the end of that song every night: that last line should've read, 'I ain't gonna fuck it up *too badly* this time.' Or perhaps, 'I'm not gonna fuck it up if I can help it, but given the range of human behavior—and besides for these few moments onstage, I'm completely dysfunctional—I can promise....'

"Actually, those would've been the words [if the song] had been on my first album—I could've fit 'em all in there."

10/15/05, Madison, WI ("Long Time Comin'")

"All right, I gotta ask whoever's doing that clapping out there... you're driving me up the fucking wall, man. I don't wanna be no clap Nazi or anything like that, but *[laughs]*... what's going on around you and fall in, fall in time. It's making me fucking nuts [laughs]. I appreciate the spirit of the whole thing, but... cut that the fuck out, all right?"

10/20/05, Worcester, MA

"This song I wrote as a sequel to the songs that were set in California on the *Tom Joad* record. I lived in California for three or four years, and my folks lived there for 30 years, up in the Bay Area, and I used to drive up through the Central Valley and stop in all the little farm towns on my way up to visit 'em.

"Every year there's hundreds of people that die trying to get across our southern border. This was a very, very hot summer, and they die from dehydration in the desert or drown in the rivers. And, if you eat strawberries and tomatoes, or eggplant, or lettuce, these are all crops that can't be machine-harvested. Machines can't get those things—there are people out there picking those. And if you eat any of those things and enjoy any of those things... their hands, they're at your table."

10/20/05, Worcester, MA ("Matamoros Banks")

"Size does matter."

10/24/05, Richmond, VA ("Growin' Up" on ukulele)

"I took one of my kids to his first rock show the other night. It was a show of his that he wanted to go to, so I took him and a bunch of kids with him. It's this little sweaty club, and there were maybe a thousand kids in this mosh pit, and everybody was stage diving. There was a little bar by the side of the place where they let you go if you were a geriatric. So I was up there amongst all the walkers and the wheelchairs. I squeezed in *[laughs]*... then I got a little drink, and I watched the whole thing go on.

"All night goes by, and I don't see him. I assume he's all right—some of the other kids are runnin' back and, you know, they've got their shirts. And I hear, 'Mr. Springsteen, hold my shirt!' 'Mr. Springsteen, hold my glasses!' And the shirts are soaked with sweat.... Towards the end of the night, I catch a glimpse of him in the crowd, for a second, just for a second, and there he was. It was like watching a miracle take place."

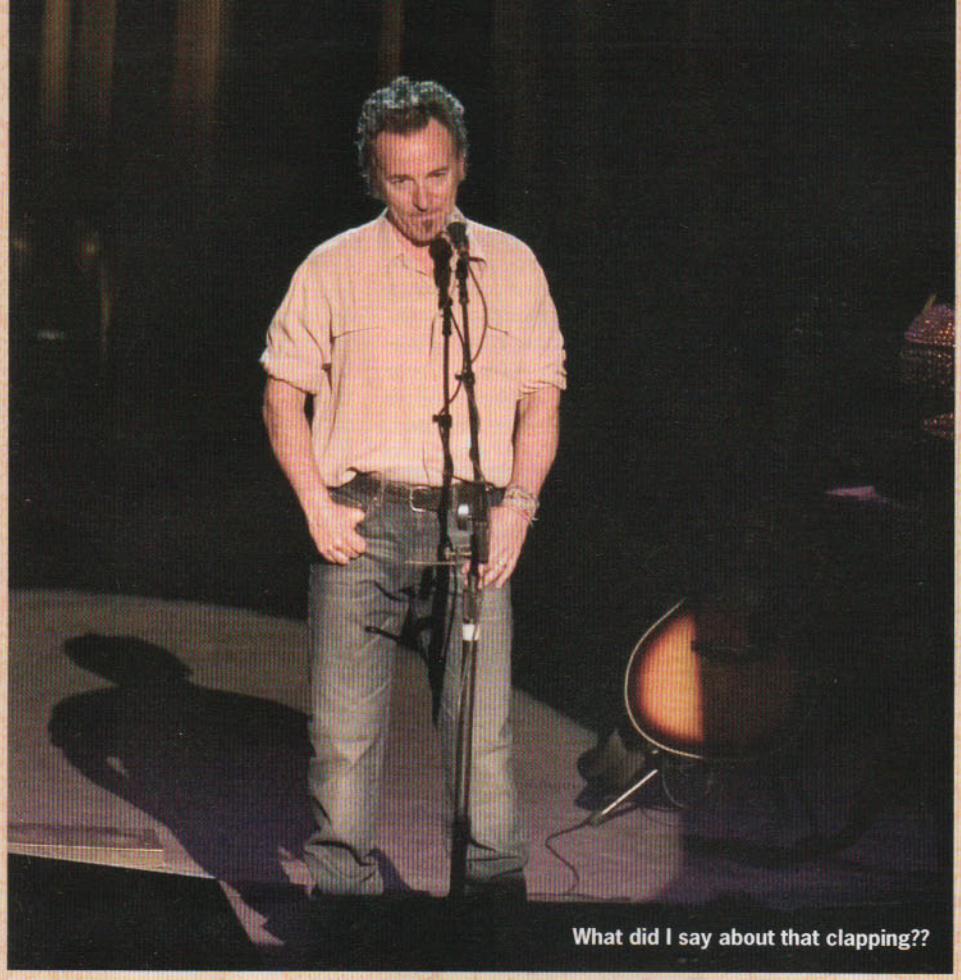
10/28/05, Boston, MA ("Long Time Comin'")

"My mother was very romantic and had all the great singers from the '50s—where the guys were all singing really high. You had all these men at the time, trying to sing like beautiful women.... They didn't need any words. It sort of transcended the language. But they were smart, because they were saying to the women, 'I understand you. I'm gonna come up and talk to you in your language. I'm gonna sing where you live.... I'm a sensitive guy... will you please pull your pants down?'

"Because all rock 'n' roll music, no matter how romantic—even all the great protest songs, I guarantee—were written because somebody wanted somebody else to pull their pants down. Even if it was some leftist, intellectual guy at a college, he wanted the pants down!

"All pop songs worth their salt work that way, you know. Even all mine. You can also put it on the last line of any good rock song, and it works—like, 'It's a town full of losers, and we're pullin' out of here to win—and will you pull your pants down?' It works right after that, too.

"Yeah. 'Tramps like us, baby, we were born to run. Now, will you pull your pants down?' It's in all



ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

What did I say about that clapping??

of them. Think about it! Roll that over in your head a little bit. You'll see what I'm talking about."

11/4/05, Tampa, FL

"I write two kinds of songs: songs of hope, and songs of eternal damnation. And I don't like to pussyfoot around in the middle."

11/9/05, Philadelphia, PA

"My rewrite of 'Pretty Woman.'"

11/9/05, Philadelphia, PA ("Cynthia")

"I woke up in a Disneyland hotel. I was in bed with two Mousketeers, Britney Spears and a ukulele."

11/9/05, Philadelphia, PA ("Growin' Up")

"I wrote this song because my dad always, always had the used cars. We had about every kind of used car imaginable. We had the used car that doesn't have a working muffler. So that was the one where when my pop would spot a police car, he'd turn the engine off real quick, and we would coast by. And then he would turn it on again. Then we had the used car that didn't go in reverse. And I always remember, we'd pull it into a parking place, and me and him pushing it, pushing it out, pushing it out, pushing it back to get it out. Never went in reverse.

Then we had the great no-heater, but that was small potatoes compared to the other two. Then we had the great no-starter. My room was right over the backyard, and I could hear my poor old dad, out there in the morning, on the ice-cold ground underneath the hood, trying to get the thing going.

"But now, there are no more used cars. Those are gone—they are now simply 'pre-owned.' I've got a garage full of *pre-owned* cars. I don't know what happened to the word *used*—I mean, was that a bad word? Why'd it get thrown out? *Pre-owned* is pretty stupid.

"And it's like, take this place: I asked, 'Where was I playing?' and they told me I was playing in the Wachovia Center. I didn't find out until tonight that I was actually playing in the Spectrum *[laughs]*. You know, these great cultural changes that we have. 'I'm goin' to Philly. Yeah, I wouldn't mind playing that Spectrum. Now we're playing goddamn Wachovia Center.' So, it's nice to know where I am. I'm thankful for that tonight.

"And, you know, it's the corporate name changes. Florida—the state of Florida has actually changed its name to Hooters. People don't know that yet, but they sold the whole franchise to the whole state. Instead of Florida, it's Hooters from now on.

"Anyway, here we go. This is for dear old dad."

11/9/05, Philadelphia, PA ("Used Cars")

"This is a song that I always sort of imagine was written for this time of year. It's kind of the end of the summer, beginning of fall... and I see that my setlist is singing about my dad tonight. So, hey, what's new?"

11/9/05, Philadelphia, PA ("Independence Day")

"Last time I was here, I cursed out a whole section that was just trying to tell me about an equipment problem. And all I have to say is... don't fuck with me, or I'll do it again!"

11/16/05, East Rutherford, NJ

"When I was living in Freehold *[crowd cheers]*—yeah, let's hear it for that hell-hole!—the importance of local bands sometimes goes unnoticed. But when you're a kid and you're just starting out, they're all that you have to hold onto. I remember when all my heroes that were on records were like a million miles away, and you could never see them or reach them. There were some local bands in the area, and one in particular, that were so important to your musical development.

"There was a band called the Motifs in our area. They were a little older than us, and they were great. The lead singer was this beautiful guy that had this really funky and unusual voice. And what was important was that you could get up close to them. They didn't mind us pushing the girls away and standing all night in front of them, watching how they were playing and what they were doing.

"It was two brothers, the Cichon brothers. One was Walter and one was Ray. Ray was the guitarist. And they were incredibly important to the early stages of your development. They were there at the end of the night. You could talk to them and they would show you how to do things.

"I wrote this song for Walter. Walter Cichon. He joined the marines in the late '60s and went and... he was killed in Vietnam.

"I was down in Washington. I was visiting the wall, and I wrote this. I wrote this for him."

11/16/05, East Rutherford, NJ ("The Wall")

"I want to play something tonight that I've never played before. *[Laughs]* Can't let the night pass without one of those! It was funny, when I wrote like this... I wrote these fables that were these sort of fantastic... almost like children's stories that I wrote around the time (of my) first and second record. This was one of those."

11/22/05, Trenton, NJ ("Zero And Blind Terry")

"I've got to thank, first and foremost, my crew, who've traveled with me this year. Great sound, great lights, and they put on the show every day and every night. I get to do my time and scoot off, and they work before me and after me. So, I want to give thanks to all the guys in my crew. George Travis, Barbara Carr, thank you, crew: Fitz, Monty, Danny, and, of course, Mr. Kevin Buell! Where is the gentleman? Come on, come, on! Get a spotlight! There he is! He has 2,000 guitars back there. 'Kevin, you know, the green one with the blue cover,' and all that... 'No, we're going to do 'Mansion' tonight!' It's quite a one-man show, and he keeps me runnin', he keeps me runnin'. There's so many: a good friend, Terry, Wayne, Mike.... I've got to thank Pats for, you know—thank you, darlin'. And, of course, my babies!

"I want to thank, also, all the fans that came out to the shows. This year was just a great time. I want to tell you I enjoyed coming out and playing like this. But to do it, you really need good audiences, and I've just had a lot of great, great audiences this year. It really made this a real pleasure. I want to give my thanks to you for that. Please tell all your friends they did a good job. Because it's a *job!* There's some hard listenin' goin' on out there. 'We're listenin'! We're listenin'! We're not talkin', we're listenin', Boss!'"

11/22/05, Trenton, NJ

ON COLLECTING

By Fred Mills

Shake!
(Anubis 2CDR)
VENUE: Festhalle
CITY: Frankfurt, Germany
DATE: April 14, 1981
SOUND QUALITY: 7.5
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 8

The European stretch of the *River* tour kicked off on April 7, 1981, in Hamburg and barnstormed for two solid months. The leg subsequently yielded several famous bootlegs: *Follow That Dream* and *Teardrops on the City* (Stockholm, 5/7 and 5/8), and *Born to Be the Boss* (London, 6/5), all originally from the vinyl era; plus *Run Through the Jungle* (arguably the best of the batch, from Rotterdam, 4/29) and *Hallenstadium 1981* (Zurich 4/11), which made their debuts on CD.

Anubis' latest numbered/limited edition chronicles the fourth night of the tour. The label reportedly tracked down a DAT dubbed from the original analog cassette, so there's no hiss or noticeable generation loss. There are some sonic issues, however. A blast of jarring low-end distortion greets your ears at the start of "Prove It All Night," and while the taper quickly adjusts the levels, there are slight variations in volume and clarity throughout the concert, likely due to the taper jockeying for position. There are also a few minor cuts, one between "The River" and "Badlands," and another that snips off the beginning seconds of "Sherry Darling." But those are only ephemeral distractions, as the energy level the E Street Band cranks up comes across in spades. Highlights include *River* tour mainstay "Who'll Stop the Rain," a surprise "Point Blank" (which had been absent from setlists for some time), a seamless "Racing in the Street"/"Backstreets" pairing, and an over-the-top finale that grafts "Shake" onto "Detroit Medley" then catapults into "Rockin' All Over the World."

Packaging-wise, there's an eight-page booklet featuring a reproduction of the original concert poster plus some Euro *River* tour commentary borrowed from Brucezine *Point Blank* #4. All in all, a very nice archival release.

Grand Rapids Night
(Crystal Cat 2CD)
VENUE: Van Andel Arena
CITY: Grand Rapids, MI
DATE: August 3, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 9.5
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 9

As duly reported on *Backstreets.com*, the Grand Rapids show "was momentous from the get-go," kicking off with an emotional "Tunnel of Love" on electric piano and moving through a flawlessly selected setlist. With near-flawless sound for *Grand Rapids Night*—the only "flaw," as it were, being a rather vocal fan in the vicinity of the taper—you could do far worse than this title if you're looking for a solid representative of Leg 3 of the *D&D* tour. The packaging is up to the usual CC high standards, although it should be said that the label's gotten rather complacent, offering the standard "excellent" color photos, and, for liners, simply reprinting the same *Backstreets.com* concert review rather than penning a fresh one. The bonus tracks are well chosen too: "Lift Me Up," "Back in Your Arms," "When You're Alone" and "Valentine's Day," all from Columbus on July 31.

Springsteen's falsetto was a notable feature of this solo tour, and *Grand Rapids Night* offers ample proof of how good it can be. His singing in both "Tunnel of Love" and "One Step Up" is marvelous, while the aforementioned "Lift Me Up" (an obscure song from the John Sayles film *Limbo* that eventually turned up

The Italian Box 2005: Bologna, Roma, Milano
(Crystal Cat 6CD)

Bologna Dust Night
VENUE: Palamalaguti Arena
CITY: Bologna, Italy
DATE: June 4, 2005
Roma Dust Night
VENUE: Palalottomatica Arena
CITY: Rome, Italy
DATE: June 6, 2005
Milano Dust Night
VENUE: Forum Assago
CITY: Milan, Italy
DATE: June 7, 2005

SOUND QUALITY: 9 / 9 / 9.5
PERFORMANCE: 9/ 10/ 9
PACKAGING (BOX): 9

With apologies to Dr. Seuss, do you like your Springsteen in his socks? With a fox? *In a box?* Crystal Cat has packaged the three *D&D* Italian shows into a quietly impressive 5" x 6" x 1.5" thick cardboard slipcase, each set in its own double-slimline jewel case with eight-page booklet. One subtle touch: when slid into the box, the three cases display, respectively, green, white and red spines—the colors of the Italian flag. There's also a fold-out 8.5" x 11" poster. (The transparent tabby did a similar Dylan box a year or so ago.) A nice package all around; ultimately, though, whether you spring for this one will boil down to whether want the entire three-night run—you can see how each show varies in *Backstreets* #83/84, or at the setlists section of *Backstreets.com*—or if you simply prefer a single, representative show from any given leg or tour segment.

If of the latter persuasion, the rub for Crystal Cat devotees is that, at press time at least, it doesn't appear that the three nights are available as separate purchases. However, several labels have done Rome, including Anubis and Godfather (both reviewed in *Backstreets* #83/84), and Godfather also issued the other two. In fact, the digital don's *The Powerful Thing* (Bologna), *Once Upon a Time in Rome* (Rome) and *Dream Milano Dream* (Milan) are all outstanding, each featuring sleek, tri-fold "wallet" packages and with sound quality comparable to the CC titles. Unlike CC, Godfather also tacked on bonus tracks. Admittedly, CC traditionally puts a lot of work into the mastering and equalizing of its tapes' sonics, and as the *Italian Box* is subtly "hotter" in feel, overall, we'll give it a very slight nod over the Godfather trilogy. But only slight. —*F.M.*

on *Essential)* is sung almost *entirely* in falsetto. It's like hearing a worshipful angel chorus of one, and it will take your breath away.

All Those Nights Vol. 2
(Crystal Cat 3CD)
VENUE/CITY/DATE: Various European *D&D* shows, 5/27/05 - 6/28/05
SOUND QUALITY: 8-10
PERFORMANCE: 9-10
PACKAGING: 10

In 1994 Crystal Cat issued the two-disc *All Those Nights*, a 1992-'93 tour compilation collecting rarities and one-offs that hadn't yet appeared on any of the label's other releases from the tour. Twelve years later CC unveils a second volume, this one covering the European leg of the *D&D* tour. The concept diverges slightly, since a handful of cuts have surfaced on CC elsewhere (on *Paris Dust Night, Gothenburg Dust Night, Stockholm Dust Night* and *The Italian Box*; 13 tunes in all). And it's not strictly a rarities collection, either, as evidenced by the inclusion of "For You" (Madrid, 6/2), "Brilliant Disguise" (Rome, 6/6) and "State Trooper" (Brussels, 5/30), all of which Bruce played several times on the European leg.

Otherwise, though, not only is the rarities angle conceptually appealing to Springsteen fans (duh), listening to these 46 chronologically sequenced tunes—among which there are only two from the *D&D* album, "All The Way Home" (Brussels) and "All I'm Thinkin' About" (Copenhagen 6/5)—yields what amounts to a trawl though a "secret history" of the *D&D* tour. Imagine a Bruce concert, for example, that might've sequenced together "Highway Patrolman" (Madrid), "My Father's House" (Bologna, 6/4) and "Nebraska" (Rome) as a kind of free-form meditation on blood ties. Or, on a less existential level, a show that in the space of, say, one hour, serves up "Point Blank" (Munich, 6/13), "Incident on 57th Street" (Dusseldorf, 6/16), "Spirit in the Night," "Wild Billy's Circus Story" (both Copenhagen) *and* "The Promise" (Stockholm, 6/25). Old-school Bruce fans could die happy right then and there.

And the "hits," one-off or otherwise, just keep coming on *ATNV2*, with every show from the Euro leg except Dublin 5/24 represented, and with nearly every song in outstanding sound quality; only a few times does the taper seem distantly positioned or does crowd noise become distracting. A sharp-looking 12-page booklet, featuring four pages of capsule reviews lifted from Backstreets.com, rounds things out. Ultimately, one of the Cat's most desirable titles in years.

Definitive Dust
(Hot Stuff 4CDR)
VENUE/CITY/DATE: Various *D&D* shows
SOUND QUALITY: 7-9
PERFORMANCE: 8-10
PACKAGING: 2

With just a tiny bit more effort applied, Hot Stuff could've had a decent collectible here. Sixty-nine songs spread across four discs—that's a pretty healthy dose o' da Boss, and no one's going to complain about getting such infrequently performed tunes as "Santa Ana," "Thundercrack," "Sad Eyes," "Be True," "Frankie" and "Lift Me Up." And despite some inevitable variations in sound quality (a few songs fade out prematurely, too) it's an eminently enjoyable collection. That said, the sleeve indicates that *Definitive Dust* contains "every song performed on the tour," which is certainly *not* the case. Where's "The Wish"? "Cautious Man"? "Nebraska"? "Wild Billy's Circus Story"? Strike "definitive" from the equation. Also, with zero venue/city/date information provided on the sleeve (a fold-out mini-LP design—significantly, with only two pockets to house all four discs), the set's not doing collectors any favors. Some profess to love the sinner but hate the sin. Likewise, with *Definitive Dust*, it's a case of loving the concept, hating the execution.

Michigan Palace 1975
(Hot Stuff 2CDR)
VENUE: Michigan Palace
CITY: Detroit, MI
DATE October 4, 1975
SOUND QUALITY: 3
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 5

Hot Stuff strikes a Luddite blow against the dark forces of cleaned-up remasters with its manhandling of this classic *Born to Run* soundboard. Originally issued by Midnight Beat in 1995 as *First Night in Detroit* and subsequently upgraded last year by Anubis as *Walk Like the Heroes* (see *Backstreets* #82 for the review), the Michigan Palace recording always had its issues. Chief among them were a faded-out "Rosalita" and, on the Midnight Beat version, some noticeable tape drag, which Anubis was able to address to a degree. This new treatment, however, adds grave insult to minor injury. First of all, there's a fade-out between each song, suggesting the material was sourced from MP3s. Incredibly, the speed problem has been reinstated too. Finally, the whole tape appears to have been dunked in a vat of sibilance, as the high-end components—cymbals, especially, and much of Bruce's vocals—are painfully shrill (hiss has been magnified too). Gee, is it possible to take a flawed-but-enjoyable recording and turn it into an unlistenable mess? Hot Stuff says yes!

Backstreets does not endorse the illegal sale of bootleg recordings, nor can we advise as to their legality or how they may be obtained.

the backstreets jukebox

1. Bruce Springsteen
We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions
Columbia (DualDisc)

2. Chocolate Genius
Black Music
V2 (CD)

3. Twilight Singers
Powder Burns
One Little Indian (CD)

4. The Bomb
Indecision
Thick Records (CD)

5. Johnny Cash
American V: A Hundred Highways American (CD)

6. Alejandro Escovedo
The Boxing Mirror
Back Porch (CD)

7. Matthew Sweet and Susanna Hoffs
Under the Covers Vol. 1
Shout! Factory (CD)

8. Pearl Jam
Pearl Jam
J Records (CD)

9. The Mendoza Line
Full of Light and Full of Fire
Misra (CD)

10. Cheap Trick
Rockford
Cheap Trick Unlimited/Big3 (CD)

10 records that helped make this issue possible

THIS MUST BE A FIRST: SPRINGSTEEN has started another tour before we've been able to fully process the last one. Just means more recordings to listen to....

As mentioned previously, the question among collectors for the *Devils & Dust* tour, for the most part, hasn't been whether a recording exists, but how good is the recording? And more often than not, the answer to that question is: pretty darn good. The gem of the fall tour recordings is the Nicky C version of the November 8, 2005, show from Philadelphia. Very sharp and very clear, with the perfect amount of audience noise—hearing the crowd's reaction to "Drive All Night" is one of the highlights.

One of the biggest surprises of the fall leg (from a taping perspective, at least) was that only one recording circulated from the November 16 Meadowlands show; fortunately, that recording from "Mike T" is a good one. However, there were two different recordings from the second night, one of which, the Scoper version, was played as part of Sirius' "Live Thunder" series just days later. Unfortunately, although very warm in sound, this version is incomplete, as technical difficulties resulted in missing significant pieces of "Cautious Man" and "Reno." The Bossman version is definitely cleaner, almost to the point of being sterile; this recording would be a good candidate for a remaster.

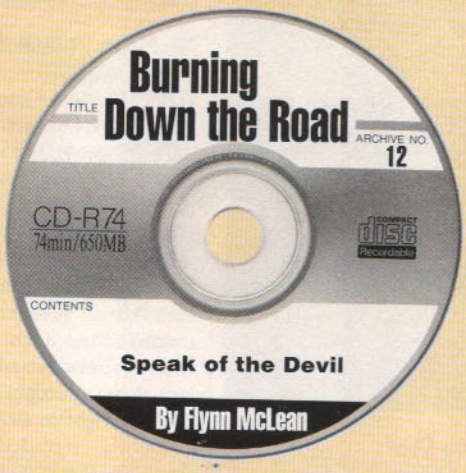
There were several excellent recordings from the Atlantic City show on November 13—JB, Bakerstuff, and Edtyre—plus two remasters, one by Neo and another by JerseyBoy. These remasters do improve the sound quality, and if we considered one to be definitive it would have to be the Neo remaster of the Edtyre recording. Very upfront, rich sound, with not a lot of audience chatter. The JerseyBoy remaster mixed the Bakerstuff and Edtyre versions together, creating a very full listening experience, although there are a couple of times when the recordings aren't in sync.

As expected, there was not a shortage of recordings for the tour-closing Trenton shows, with no fewer than three recordings circulating for each night. For the first night, the Samuez recording edges out the Bossman recording overall, although the Bossman version has less nearby crowd noise. For the closing night, the race is between JB and Bossman, and it's a very tight finish. Again, Bossman's recording is a cleaner recording, but JB's has a warmer overall feel. Godfather Records paid the Bossman a compliment by using his as the source for their *Greetings from Trenton* release. Now, a mix of the Bossman and JB recordings would be killer.

The hidden treasure of the fall leg, though, is the recording from the October 12 show in Minneapolis. It almost sounds like it was recorded from stands as the audience is slightly distant, yet the music is very prominent, and with a set list that included the only tour performance of "Thunder Road," hearing an awed, yet appropriately distant, crowd is a big treat.

The Madison, Wisconsin, show from October 15 generated high-quality audio, as well as an outstanding DVD called *Madison, That's Where the Fun Is,* courtesy of a joint effort between SDonkey and Cheesesteak Productions. The DVD features a nice two-camera mix (although the cameras are handheld, so the picture isn't perfectly steady), and dubbed audio from the aforementioned excellent audio recording. With chapters and a credits sequence, the production values are quite high.

The July 24 show in Charlotte, NC, produced another high quality DVD from the 2005 tour, this one called *A Circus Town is Born.* Just like the Madison DVD, this one also features a two-camera mix, although it goes to just one camera in the encores, with JB's excellent audio recording as the soundtrack.

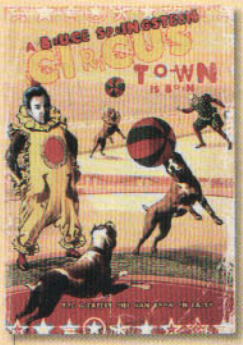


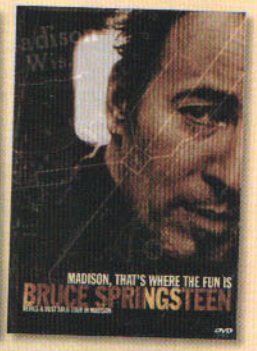
Despite all the fine recordings, both audio and video, from the tour, we do have a rare hole in the Springsteen live archives: The October 24 show in Richmond, VA, will join the short list of regular concerts not circulating among fans.

IF ANY TOUR DESERVED TO BE "compilationized," it was the 2005 *Devils & Dust* tour, and we can consider it sufficiently honored with nearly half a dozen fan-made titles. As previously mentioned, montys put together an eight-disc series of tour debuts and other unique performances from the tour. The discs were BitTorrented one at a time, as soon as enough material was gathered to fill up a disc. No fancy segues or time-consuming EQ-ing was done, as the raw recordings from previously posted recordings were used.

That collection was the genesis for the most famous of the *Devils & Dust* compilations, *Devils, Dusts, and Dreamin' Babies.* Another BitTorrent user took the montys set and, while keeping the track listing intact, added segues and some equalizing to smoothen things up a bit. This set was mentioned in the March 23, 2006, issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Another compilation was called *Springsteen Saloon,* a 12-disc set organized in a more listenable order and containing every song performed on the tour, including the various





arrangements of each song. The first nine discs are sequenced as one long show, with the first disc featuring openers from the tour, the second disc featuring songs done after "Devils & Dust," then the first piano set, etc. Disc 10 features songs with guest performers, such as Little Steven, Clarence Clemons, and Bruce Hornsby, while the last two discs include different arrangements of songs that appear on the other discs. Smooth transitions plus the organized sequencing are two big pluses on this one, although there are a handful of questionable song selections, such as "Real World" from Pittsburgh and "Back in Your Arms" from Nassau. One solid positive for this set is that the creators indicated the source of each recording used, which is very useful for those who hear something they like and want to track down the complete show.

Love, Tears, and Mystery is an 11-disc set from the same individual who has put together several compilations from previous tours (and, in the interest of full disclosure, that individual is this writer). Just like *Springsteen Saloon,* this set includes performances of every song, including the various arrangements, from the tour. The first two discs comprise what could be considered an ideal show, while each of the remaining nine discs is ordered as a mini-show. In addition to smooth segues, equalizing was done as needed in an attempt to get the best sound quality of each recording.

Another compilation, appropriately titled *One Hell of a Devilish Summer,* covers only the spring and summer legs. *Devilish Summer* is similar to *Love, Tears, and Mystery* in that each disc is organized in a mini-show sequence, and it works well, although some segues feel rushed and clipped. Bruce's spoken intros are given prominence in this set, as they were a prominent part of each show on the tour.

A LONG-TIME BRUCE TAPER, PERSIC, HAS continued to upload torrents of recordings taken directly from his masters, and while many of these have circulated previously, the fact that these new versions are from the masters make them upgrades over what was previously in circulation. While all of them are upgrades in some fashion, a couple stand out. First off, the persic recording from the September 18, 1985, show in Oakland easily assumes a position in the top echelon of *Born in the U.S.A.* tour tapes. This one is just amazing, with very upfront vocals and an appropriate level of audience noise. The set list is pretty

standard for that leg of the tour, but it does include a very rare performance of "Stolen Car."

For those who have listened to *Roses and Broken Hearts*, the soundboard recording of the May 3, 1988, show, and wished they had the whole show in same quality as the last two songs of the encores, from an excellent audience source, your time has come, my friends. With persic releasing his own full version of that *Tunnel* show, we now know that it was his recording used to complete the soundboard for the Great Dane and Gamble Records releases.

In the constant search for the best-sounding version of each show, another BitTorrent user, erno, has taken it upon him/herself to remaster many of persic's recordings. In most cases, the raw recordings are good enough so that the only modifications made are smoothing out segues and fades. The sound quality is usually improved as well, and bonus tracks are often added to fill out the last disc of the show. One of the top erno remasters of a persic recording is the Halloween 1984 show from Los Angeles, which erno titled *Halloween Confidential*, a reference to the opening "High School Confidential." The sound quality is above average, and the setlist includes the rarities "My Father's House" and "I Fought the Law." Six bonus tracks from other nights on the L.A. 1984 stand also deliver the goods.

Another strong persic/erno set is the last night of the legendary Los Angeles 1981 stand, August 28, titled *Scattered Like Dry Leaves*. This show has long been overshadowed by the amazing *Night for the Vietnam Veteran* eight days earlier, but with an excellent recording now available, 8/28/81 is finally able to stand out in its own right. Setlist geeks (myself included) will tell you this show featured the debut of Woody Guthrie's "Deportee (Plane Wreck At Los Gatos)," but other highlights included "Rockin' All Over the World," "I Fought the Law," and "Proud Mary." The bonus tracks on the set, all from the previous night, complete the package.

We've also learned the source of the upgraded Vietnam Vets show from 8/20/81: it's persic. And an A/B comparison of the two reveals that persic/erno's *As Dreams Don't Mean Nothing* is an improvement over *Written on the Wall*, the fan release from 2001 that utilized the upgraded source. It's a bit sharper, which shouldn't be a surprise considering it's straight from the master. While both the erno version and *Written on the Wall* used a soundboard source to fill in for the missing introductory speeches, erno also used the soundboard to fill in for the first minute of "Who'll Stop the Rain," which gives it another slight edge. And the seven bonus tracks from the other nights of the stand may make *Dreams* the definitive version.

One very cool recording to surface recently has been three-quarters of the December 31, 1980, show from Nassau Coliseum. Why is this cool, especially considering Crystal Cat's excellent *Nassau Night*? Because this new version is reportedly from a rough mix done by an assistant to Toby Scott from the original multi-track tapes. The sound is much richer and fuller than *Nassau Night* and is comparable to—maybe even a tad better than—the official "Held Up Without a Gun" on the *Essential* bonus disc. Again, though, this recording is incomplete, as 12 songs are not included at all and another five either fade in or fade out. One key disappointment is that neither "In the Midnight Hour" nor "Auld Lang Syne" is included, even though both "Held Up" and "Rosalita" are present.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, WOLFGANG'S Vault began streaming audio from some of the thousands of concerts produced by Bill Graham Presents, Bruce included. While the online playlist has only featured select songs from the various concerts, one complete Springsteen tape has apparently gotten out: the March 2, 1973, show from Berkeley, California. This is approximately the third version of the show to surface, and it is the best. The only negative is that "Lost in the Flood," just like on the other two recordings of this show, fades up about a minute into the song, suggesting that a complete version does not exist. But the remainder is about as pristine as a 33-year old unreleased soundboard recording will sound.

Two frequenters of the Stone Pony London web site are continuing their quest to locate—and upload to alt.binaries.music.springsteen (ABMS)—the best recording of every show from the *River* tour, a project dubbed "The River Flood." One of the gems they've located is an excellent tape, billed as possibly even a soundboard, of the February 12, 1981, show from Mobile, Alabama. Without any intrusive audience noise, the soundboard argument does have validity. Whether it's a soundboard or not, this recording is certainly among the best audience recordings from the *River* tour. In terms of the setlist, it's a pretty standard early-'81 show with no huge rarities, although both "Sandy" and "For You" appear in the second set.

During the three months of Sirius' E Street Radio, nearly all the "Live Thunder" shows were commonly circulated bootlegs that many collectors already owned. However, there were two notable exceptions that, for the most part, have remained under the radar: December 6, 2001, and December 8, 2003. Excellent audience recordings of both shows existed, but, upon close listening, these are indeed previously uncirculated soundboards. Granted, they're not perfectly mixed, and the dynamic range isn't tremendous after being recorded off the Sirius signal, but Bruce's vocals are very clear and upfront, the horns are right in your face, and the audience is evenly mixed in. Some fine holiday treats.

THE SEEGER SESSIONS TOUR IS JUST A few weeks old (as of deadline time) and, as with recent tours, there are nearly a dozen shows in already circulation, thanks to BitTorrent sites and ABMS. The early frontrunner for best recording has the unfair advantage of being a radio broadcast: the May 9, 2006, show from a church in London was a special taping for the BBC with only 300 people in attendance. While Bruce and the band played for nearly 80 minutes, including two takes of a couple of songs, the broadcast was a succinct 60 minutes featuring eight songs: seven from the new album, plus the show's emotional centerpiece, "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?"

Bruce's appearance at the 2006 New Orleans Jazz Fest has given us a huge rarity in the world of stealth Springsteen recordings: a show taped with mics on stands. Unfortunately, despite the elevated mic location, audience noise isn't noticeably reduced. However, the emotion of the show comes through loud and clear in this very warm recording that will probably end up on the "must have" list from this tour.

All four of the Asbury rehearsal shows—plus an audience recording of the complete *Good Morning America* performance—from Convention Hall circulated within days, and all of them are above average. Thus far, of the rehearsal shows, the April 24 and April 26 shows win out in terms of sound quality. However, in an unusual twist, the audience recording of the *GMA* taping from the 25th is the best of the bunch.

IF TIVO HAD EXISTED IN THE LATE '70S and we had set it to record everything Bruce-related, we'd now have *In Some Fashion*, an eight-disc DVD set put together by the same people who brought us *This is Your Life*. *In Some Fashion* collects nearly 16 hours of various television clips and bits, such as news coverage from various stops on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour, interviews with various E Street Band members, commercials (didja know they advertised the *Darkness* album on television?), award shows, and even short clips of Bruce attending professional basketball and baseball games. Even the infamous "Boss" category from *Jeopardy!* from 1985 is included on this set. The set also includes pro-shot footage from the 1988 European tour and an interview from early 1997 on Japanese television—just way too many highlights to cover here. While *This is Your Life* brought us complete songs, *In Some Fashion* has mostly clips of songs, but the short news stories and interviews from 1978 to 2004 will bring back a flood of memories.

Another cool DVD to recently surface is *Tramps '95* (or *Behind the Blood Brothers*, as the silver release was called), a two-DVD set of raw footage from the February 21, 1995, video shoot for "Murder Incorporated." The footage follows Bruce throughout that day, from the afternoon soundcheck at the club to the various meetings with director Jonathan Demme, to the actual show. The source is only one camera, so none of the songs are complete (for the whole show, check out the audio set *The Original Reunion*, which surfaced a couple of years ago), but the highlights of this set are from the dressing room rather than the stage, with Bruce, on guitar, leafing through his "Big Book of Lyrics" and going over a handful of songs with the E Street Band.

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#85 - SPRING 2006

Rates good through Sept. 23, 2006

Continued from page 5

Where's the Bruce/Tom/Shane CD of Irish folk songs? "Mrs. McGrath" can't be all there is! Billy Bragg is welcome as well.

As for Tom, did I happen to also mention the facial hair, and the tuba, and the "Gun Street Girl" banjo, and the "Hold On" vocalizing, and... hey, it all flows from the same source. I'm going to go play *Rain Dogs* and *Rum, Sodomy* and *Long Black Veil* and *Heartattack and Vine* and *Bone Machine* and *Workers Playtime* and *Mermaid Avenue* and just rejoice that God graced me with good taste in music!

Man, Bruce does good work. Really, really good. What a gift.

Mike Downes
via e-mail

CLAP HANDS

Dear Editor:

You owe me a Thursday night! Damn you all! I spent hours upon hours last night reading the latest, greatest issue of the magazine. I've said it before, but I can't let it go without being said again: What a fantastic issue.

I have to give you guys credit for the articles exploring far more than Bruce, and it's great to always see other artists name-dropped. Charley and Chris's comments regarding how Bruce's music is only a jumping-off point is spot on. I'm very similar, in that Bruce may enter my ears once a week right now at best, but I know the well is there and I can go to it anytime I want.

It's great to see that the magazine is not entirely focused on Bruce and also isn't some sort of idol-worshipping thing. It's nice that I can confidently show this to friends without them laughing and thinking we're all Trekkies; they are always amazed at the quality and content. That being said, when it is focused on Mr. S., it doesn't have the air of some crazy fanzine. Don't get me wrong: I realize, of course, in the end, we are all still somewhat starry-eyed, over-the-top fans. Anyway, figured you can never hear too many compliments.

Dave Gaetano
South Windsor, CT

JACK & NEAL

Dear Editor:

Congratulations to you and your team for a fantastic silver anniversary edition of *Backstreets*. Whilst reading the section dedicated to *Devils & Dust*, "The Devil's in the Details," it occurred to me that in the song "Long Time Comin'" there ought to have been a further literary reference. "My daddy he was just a stranger, lived in a hotel downtown, when I was a kid he was just somebody I'd see around" reminded me of the description of Dean Moriarty's father in Kerouac's *On the Road*—a book I wish I had read so much earlier in my life, and a book which Bruce must have read.

Jason Hughes
Leicestershire, England

CLASSIFIEDS

PERSONALS

TO MICHAEL AND CHANDLER AS THEY FACE down a brave new world; stand tall and get the job done. We're behind you. No surrender.

RENEE: WE HOPE YOU ARE DOING WELL AND can't wait to see you again. Love always, Tom, David, Michael, Julio Jr.

BRUCE: YOU WERE RIGHT. I SHOULD HAVE VOTED for change. I'll never doubt you again. —Fatigued in Philly.

WANTED

DVD (OR VIDEO) OF BRUCE HALL OF FAME speeches in their entirety for Orbison, Dylan, CCR, Jackson Browne, US. Contact tompareti@hotmail.com.

DOES ANYONE OUT THERE HAVE PHOTOS OF me on stage kissing Bruce Springsteen at the Toronto 1981 concert? I am wearing a black pea-style coat and hugging him... acurlook@hotmail.com.

FOR SALE

JAPANESE COLLECTOR SEEKS BRUCE TRADERS. Records/CDs/magazines/photos. Send your list to: MK, Sakamoto 28, #702 Araomachi Tokai 476-0003 JAPAN.

AS SEEN AT WWW.AOLMUSIC.COM: GUY ACETO'S photos of Bruce from the Seeger Sessions Tour are available at Guy's website www.aceartanddesign.com. Also available are his unique photos of AP and AP musicians. Guy is available to photograph musicians and meet your graphic design needs too!

RISE UP OUT OF THE DUST AND GET THE MOST devilish Boss DVDs & CDs around! From '73 to the present. Also have tour rarities, promo stuff, autographs, etc. SASE to: Rarities, PO Box 1456, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272 or e-mail: Bruce_Juice@yahoo.com

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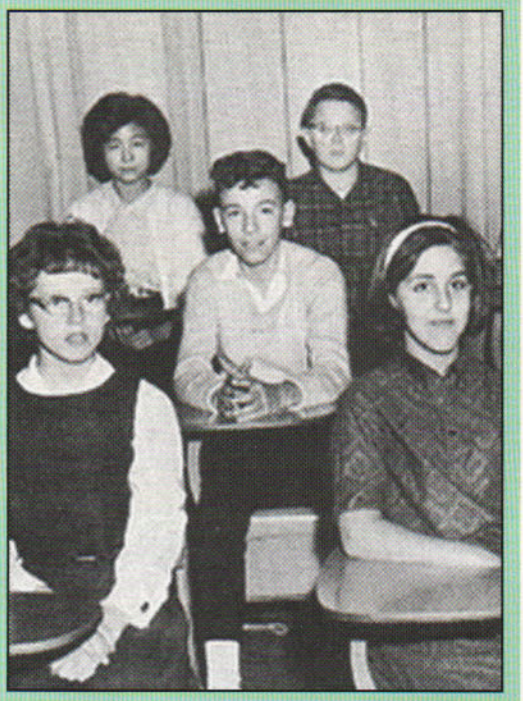
LET'S BE FRIENDS!

Greetings from the Asbury Park Public Library, where in just five years, The Bruce Springsteen Special Collection has become the world's largest public collection of Bruce books and magazines.



In the more than 4,250 publications are Bruce's first published poems (in the Ocean County College literary magazine), the yearbook photos from Bruce's freshman (yes, at right!), sophomore and senior years at Freehold Regional High School*, and all the classics in the written history of Bruce and the band.

Created and managed by fans for fans, the Collection depends on fans for its support. A membership in The Friends of the Bruce Springsteen Special Collection helps preserve and expand the Collection, so none of the essential written works are lost. For details on becoming a member, we invite you to visit us at:

www.friendsofthespringsteencollection.org

* In 1966, Bruce's junior year, he must have busted out of class on the day photos were taken, for he's nowhere in that yearbook.

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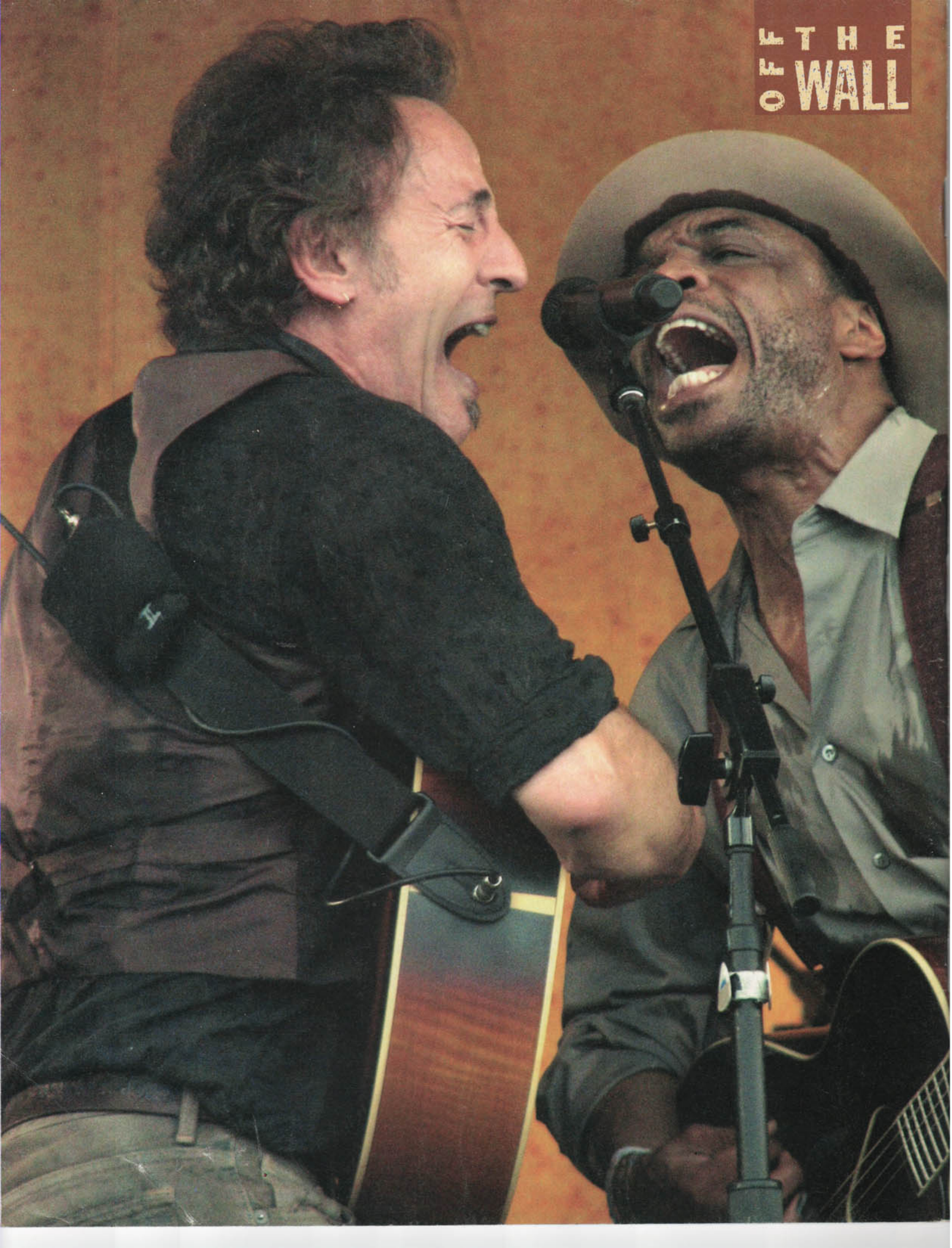
OFF THE WALL